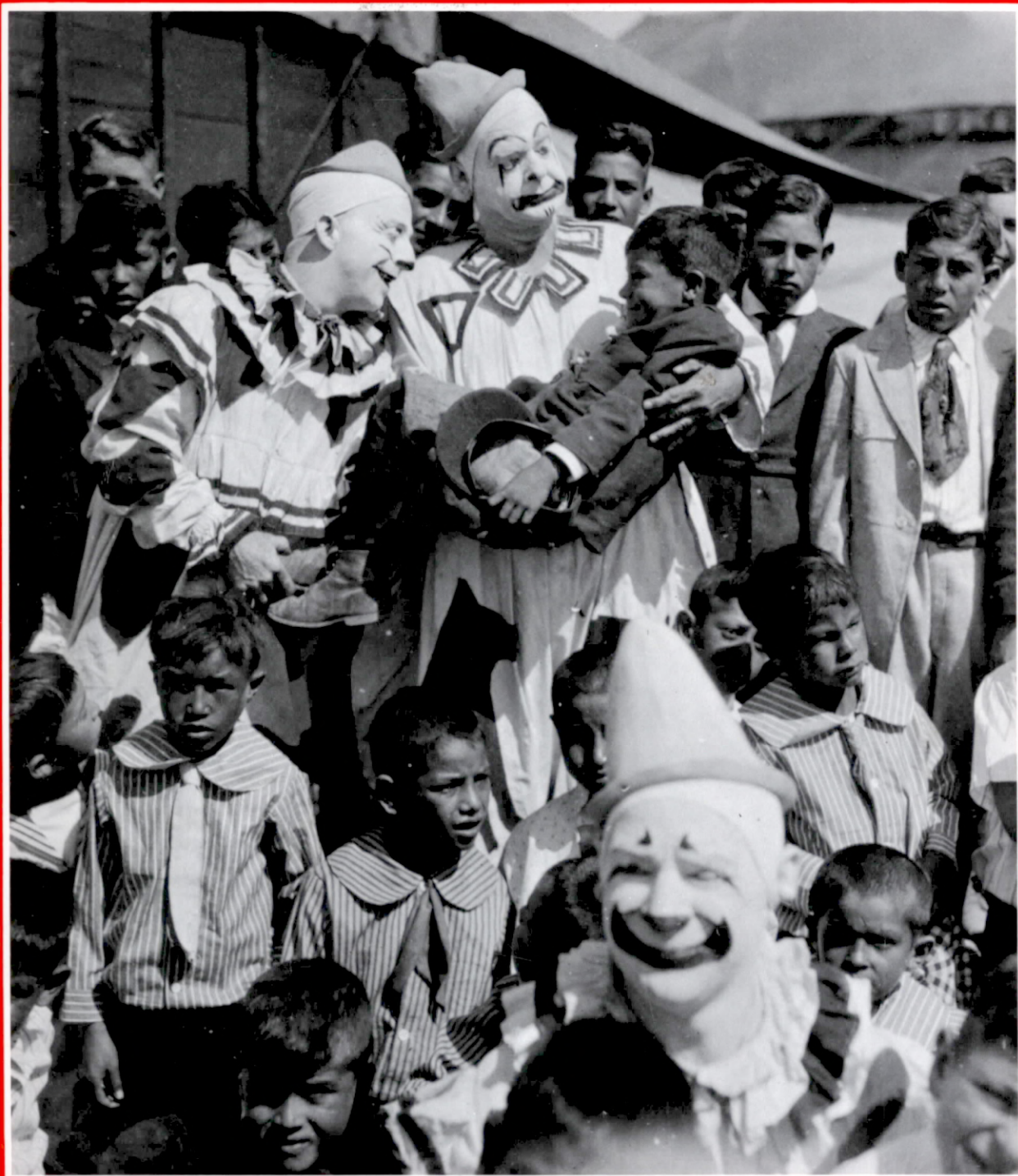


BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1995



BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

Vol. 39, No. 1

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1995

FRED D. PFENING, JR., EDITOR

Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor Stuart Thayer, Copy Editor

Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor

BANDWAGON, The Journal of the Circus Historical Society (USPS 406-390) (ISSN 0005 4968), is published bi-monthly. Second class postage paid at Columbus, OH. Editorial, advertising and circulation office is located at 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, OH 43221. Phone (614) 294-5361. Advertising rates are: Full page \$95.00, half page \$55.00, quarter page \$35.00. Minimum ad is \$25.00. The BANDWAGON is produced using a Macintosh IIcx computer, DesignStudio and TypeStyler software.

Bandwagon subscription rates, \$19.00 to members and non-members in the United States, \$24.00 per year outside the United States. Single copies \$3.00 plus \$2.00 postage. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BANDWAGON, 1075 West Fifth Ave., Columbus, OH 43212.

Offices of the Circus Historical Society are located at 3477 Vienna Ct., Westerville, OH 43081.

CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY-Fred Dahlinger, Jr., President, 451 Roblee Rd., Baraboo, WI 53913; Richard J. Reynolds III, Vice President, 1186 Warrenhall La. NE, Atlanta, GA 30319; Dale C. Haynes, Secretary-Treasurer, 3477 Vienna Ct., Westerville, OH 43081.

DIRECTORS: Div. 1-Fred D. Pfening, Jr., 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, OH 43221 (Ohio-Mich.-Ind.); Div. 2-Copeland MacAllister, 30 Salem End Rd., #2A, Framingham, MA 01701 (N.H.-Maine-Vt.-Mass.-Ct.-Del.-R.I.); Div. 3-William L. Rhodes, 2528 Taylorsville Rd., Louisville, KY 40205 (N.Y.-N.J.-Pa.-Md.-D.C.-Va.-W. Va.-Ky.); Div. 4-Joseph T. Bradbury, 1453 Ashwoody Ct., N.E., Atlanta, GA 30319 (N.C.-S.C.-Ga.-Ala.-Fla.-Miss.-Tenn.-Ark.-La.); Div. 5-Guy J. Fiorenza, 4603 Crescent Dr., Rockford, IL 61108 (Wis.-Ill.-Minn.-Iowa-Mo.); Div. 6-Orin C. King, 5225 SW 20 Terrace #302, Topeka, KS 66604 (N.D.-S.D.-Kan.-Neb.-Okla.-Tex.); Div. 7-Joseph S. Rettinger, P.O. Box 20371, Phoenix, AZ 85036 (Col.-Mont.-Ida.-Wyo.-N.M.-Utah-Nev.-Ariz.); Div. 8-Michael D. Sporrer, 14537 N. E. 40th St. #H202, Bellevue, WA 98007 (Wa.-Ore.-Ca.-Hawaii); Div. 9-Dr. Gordon D. Brown, 7459 Sakatchewan Dr., Edmonton, Alb., Can. 76G-2A5 (All countries outside the United States.)

THIS MONTH'S COVER

The cover photo was taken in the backyard of the Ringling-Barnum Circus in the 1920s. It is from the Pfening Archives.

NEW MEMBERS

Ron Kraus 3924
212 Marsonia St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15214

Gary D. Murphy 3925
1617 North Marion
Washington, IA 52353

Ellen Balthrop 3926
9023 Liptonshire
Dallas, TX 75238

John W. Slater 3927
698 W. River St.
Bourbonnais, IL 60914

Peter F. Gorman 3928
2618 Columbia St.
Vancouver, BC, Can. V5Y 3G1

Gordon Oughton 3929
184 N. Clinton St.
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

Carl F. Miller 3930
104 S. Fifth St.
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Cole Digges 3931
Rt. 1, Box 1410A
Troy, VA 22974

W. E. Schmidt 3932
3817 N. Richmond St.
Chicago, IL 60618

Rev. John G. Toner, M.S. 3933
85 New Park Ave.
Hartford, CT 06106

Harry W. Diehl 3934
2225 Nelson Ct.
Lakewood, CO 80215

Joe Canaday 3935
2610 Hatcher Mountain Rd.
Sevierville, TN 37862

Bobby Hakes 3936
P. O. Box 1914
Sarasota, FL 34230

Elizabeth G. Morin 3937
801 Carolina Ave.
St. Cloud, FL 34769

Edward Reich 3938
216 Oakwood Ave.
Bogata, NJ 07603

Edward P. Meals 3939
485 Mirabile La.
Baltimore, MD 21224

David G. Vogel 3940
50 Pleasant St.
Gloucester, MA 01930

Robert H. McArthur 3941
1051 W. El Norte Pkwy. #122
E. Sccondido, CA 92026

Wendell Creech 3942
Rt. 2, Box 1215
Hazelhurst, GA 31539

REINSTATED

Barry Alan Richmond 1652
310 E. 70th St.
New York, NY 10021

William W. Yaun 1859
5602 Marble Arch Way
Alexandria, VA 22315

NEW BANDWAGON FORMAT

Since 1957 when the magazine became its current size, the *Bandwagon* has had many changes in design. In 1987 it was converted to computer desktop publishing.

This issue has been redesigned, making it easier to read. A new text type face and a new page layout makes the pages more open and less busy. The logo on the cover and masthead page has been changed.

SEASON REVIEW DELAYED

Due to a computer crash the review of the 1994 circus season will appear in the March-April issue.

BACK ISSUES OF BANDWAGON

1966-Jan.-Feb.
1967-July-Aug., Nov.-Dec.
1968-All but Jan.-Feb.
1969-July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.
1970-All but July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.
1971-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.
1972-All available.
1973-All but Jan.-Feb., Nov.-Dec.
1974-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.
1975-All available.
1976-All but Jan.-Feb., Nov.-Dec.
1977-All but Mar.-Ap.
1978-All available.
1979-All but Jan.-Feb.
1980-1986-All available.
1987-All but Nov.-Dec.
1988-1994-All available.

Price is \$3.00 each. Add \$2.00 postage for one issue, \$5.00 for more than one issue. Please select substitutes in case we are out of any of above.

BANDWAGON BACK ISSUES
2515 DORSET RD.
COLUMBUS, OH 43221

**BIG SALE ON ALL
CIRCUS
CRAFT KITS**

HO, O AND 1/2'

Limited supply of Revell
1/48 scale 2-ton Chevrolet
truck in stock. Regular \$10,
sale \$8.50

Send stamped, self ad-
dressed envelope for list.
State which scale you
build in.

CLASSIC KITS
P. O. Box 0262
Kittrell, NC 27544



Do you have our current "N"
catalog?

If not you are missing out.
We carry the best in
"HO" and "O"
Circus Kits, Books, Posters
and collectibles.
We've got something for
everybody.

Send \$4.00 to:

STAR CIRCUS SUPPLIES
3037 Grass Valley Hwy.
Auburn, CA 95602

It's Here . . .
The Long Awaited Book By
FRANK CAIN

**I NEVER WENT TO
CLOWN COLLEGE**

Interesting and Historical
Reflections and Recollec-
tions of Many Famous Cir-
cuses (Mud Shows, Indoor
and Railroad) plus Circus
Personalities, by a Pro-
ducing Clown 1942-1956.

Many unpublished photos.
\$22.95 PP
MIDWAY MUSEUM
PUBLICATIONS
P. O. BOX 6477
NASHUA, NH 03063

SPECIAL SALE
Three volumes,
***Annals of the
American Circus***

The indexed and annotated history of the
American circus from Ricketts to the Re-
bellion. Nothing of its kind available any-
where else. Nine-hundred-nine (909) pages
containing the capsule history of every cir-
cus that travelled America for sixty-seven
years. Routes, rosters and programs in-
cluded.

Volume I (reprint), 1793-1829. Volume
II, 1830-1847. Volume III, 1848-1860.

Standard price: \$30.00 each.
Now offered at three volumes for \$75.00.
(Thirty-eight sets remaining)

Postpaid from the author
Stuart Thayer
430 17th Avenue East
Seattle, WA 98112



BORN IN A TRUNK

A memoir by Billy Toby Choate

A great book on Choate's Comedians
and Bisbee's Comedians. Two of the great
repertoire shows.

Only \$11.75 a book. Plus \$2.00 shipping
and handling.

Send check or money order to:
Billy Toby Choate
104 Summit Ave.
Wayne City, IL 62895

Please make checks payable to BORN IN A TRUNK

As a master horse trainer and equestrian performer, John Herriott is unique in circus annals. At the top of his profession in the creation and presentation of exciting high school and liberty horse and pony acts, he is a legend in his own time. In addition, he is an excellent elephant and camel trainer and has put together picturesque exotic animal acts combining llamas and ponies. His Big and Little Horse act, featuring a Clydesdale and a 31 inch miniature horse, never fails to please and amuse audiences.

Undergirding all this work is a deep and abiding interest in the history of the circus, acquired from the many interesting personalities whom he has either known or has been told or read about. This knowledge has enabled him to become a fascinating performance director and ring announcer.

In addition to all of these accomplishments must be added the showmanship of his wife, Mary Ruth, and their four daughters Laura, Cindy, Heidi and Christine. Mary Ruth is a beautiful high school rider as well as a skilled presenter of liberty horses. She has also created and presented interesting dog acts and has included canines in her famous poodle and pony circus. She has been a graceful performer with her husband in doing the elephant acts. Some years ago she was a daring aerialist on the trapeze.

All four daughters, under the tutelage of their parents, are professional equestrian and animal performers as well as aerialists. As examples of their artistic versatility may be cited such specialties as side saddle and high school riding, elephant routines, dog acts, dog and pony acts, liberty ponies and horses, single llama, juggling, cloud swing and web as well as performance director and announcer.

FIVE GENERATIONS OF HERRIOTTS

By John Daniel Draper

John's career was rooted in his father Milton Herriott's background.

The first Herriott to arrive in America was David, who landed near Perth Amboy, Woodbridge, New Jersey in 1684. Osmer Pike Herriott, Milton's father, was a meat cutter and chef on the old Miller Bros. 101 Ranch. Milton's mother, Georgia, who ran a boarding house, was a seer who correctly predicted that her son would some day work at a zoo.

Milton Lindsay Herriott was born in Webb City, Missouri in 1903 and began his circus career about 1916. A June 1923 *Billboard* account sent in by him reported that Rialdo's Dog and Pony Show, a most unlikely organization, was travelling on wagons through districts of Kansas and Oklahoma doing good business. Herriott was on the show as producing clown and doing a comedy ladder act. The show carried 8 people, 7 wagons, 9 big ponies, 6 head of baggage stock, 3 monkeys and 6 dogs.

By the middle of 1924 Milton was definitely committed to his chosen field of the circus. He was then superintendent of animals on the Mighty Haag Show. Later in the season he moved to Seils-

John Herriott presenting liberty horses at the Sarasota Festival Circus in December 1994. James Cole photo.

Sterling as dog and horse trainer as well as equestrian director and superintendent of quarters. At that time and until the midpoint of 1927 he was working under the surname of Grimes, the name of his mother's second husband.

On the Mighty Haag Show at the Marianna, Florida quarters in early 1925 he was believed to be the only trainer ever to break a riding leopard in an open circus ring without an arena. With

Ab Johnson and Tom Mathews, Milton as a principal trainer was also involved in breaking and training camels, zebras, ponies, mules, bears, monkeys, horses and dogs. In addition, he prepared to offer Australian whip cracking in the concert.

In October of 1925 he moved back to the Seils-Sterling Circus where he remained through the 1926 season. He worked with the Lindemanns in breaking a toyland act consisting of a baby elephant, Shetland stallion and a large collie dog. This act played vaudeville during the winter of 1925-1926. When Seils-Sterling quartered at Carlinville, Illinois, Milton would take the famous elephant Billy Sunday for walks about town as preparations were being made for the upcoming winter dates. In 1926 Milton was with the Heritage Bros. rail circus.

In 1927 he worked first on the Honest Bill Show as equestrian director, and was then on Christy Bros. for a brief period with a twelve white horse liberty act. He rejoined Seils-Sterling after mid-season.

William Newton had the original pickout pony on his Honest Bill Show. He taught the act to Milton who passed it on to his son John who in the 1960's presented the pickout mule January at the Circus World Museum. Pickout mules are very rare.





Milt Herriott, John Engesser, Albert Engesser, Harold Engesser and Mrs. John Engesser, Sr. on Shell Bros. Circus in 1932. John Herriott collection.

Milton was also familiar with the more classical January mule routine, which he could describe in detail. This act started with a pony in the ring going over hurdles with the ringmaster in attendance. A clown then came in and said he had a critter that would do the same thing. When asked how big the mule was, the clown said that he was two axes and a ginger box high. He then brought in a very small mule hitched to a cart. (Well the mule had gotten smaller after two trades.) That creature then

Milton Herriott equestrian director Mills Bros. Circus in 1943. Pfening Archives.



started to buck and eventually kicked the cart to pieces. Charlie Parker was the great clown-mule actor.

In 1927 Merritt Belew was the equestrian director and horse trainer on Christy Bros. Circus. It was from him that Milton learned the fundamentals of presenting a liberty horse act. Belew's characteristic signature for this act, learned in turn from Austin King, was the manner in which he dismissed the horses from the ring. As the column was circling and the last horse in the line passed the ring entrance, it spun through a 270 degree counterclockwise rotation and left the ring. On the next pass of the ring door, the last horse repeated this action and left. In turn each horse left the ring in a similar fashion until the lead horse was all that remained. It would run

past the entrance, then correct its error by backing up, then make the 270 degree turn and leave the ring.

This style made a very smoothly flowing and graceful finish to a beautiful act. Milton learned this technique on the Christy circus and passed it on to John, who has worked it to perfection. This is just one example of what gives all the Herriotts' presentations that element of class. What a contrast to the way many liberty acts conclude where several grooms rush into the ring and each one grabs two horses by the head pieces and leads them out.

In 1928 Milton Herriott married Violet Engesser, the sister of George Engesser, who was the owner of Zellmar Bros. Circus. Milt Herriott was equestrian director on this circus which travelled on fifty-four trucks and wintered at Weatherford, Texas. Among his many and various duties that year, one was the raising of a baby dromedary on a bottle.

For parts of the following three seasons as well as 1935 he was on Engesser's Schell Bros. Circus, the successor to Zellmar Bros. On this show he served variously as equestrian director, lot superintendent, manege rider, presenter of military ponies and liberty horse acts as well riding dogs, goats and monkeys, leaping greyhounds and elephant acts. He also purchased ring stock for manege acts, was superintendent of winter quarters and broke liberty horse acts, camel acts and a four elephant act. Milton

made a hit in 1930 with an Indian jockey riding act that included Alma Taylor, and Ambrose and Mary McKone.

The Engesser circus at times wintered in Texas or California. Often in charge of Engesser's trained animals during the winter, Milton booked them at Shrine circuses.

In the fall of 1929 he worked grandstand acts for Seils-Sterling at fairs in Albert Lea and St. Peter, Minnesota. He presented riding dogs and monkeys, liberty ponies, dogs and a manege horse. During a large part of 1931 he was in charge of animals at the Longfellow Zoo in Minneapolis, where he broke ponies, dogs, monkeys, seals and two chimps. For part of the 1930 season on Schell Bros. his wife rode manege and worked elephants.

During this interval his two children were born, Jean in 1929 and John in 1931.

The Herriotts were on John D. Foss' Barney Bros. Circus in 1937. Milton was animal trainer and equestrian di-



John Herriott with two former Polack Bros. elephants on Kelly-Miller in 1944.

rector. Among other acts he worked an eight horse black and white liberty act. John, aged six, was a clown and had a dog act. That year John rode in a Model T Ford truck. As the circus came into town, his job was to pour lime through a funnel in an opening in the floor so that the route to the lot was indicated by a white trail on the street.

In 1938 and 1939 Milton had his family with him in Washington, D. C. where he worked for Dr. William Mann at the National Zoological Park. In 1940 he had pony, dog and goat acts at fairs and in the late fall of 1941 he was with the Stanbury Christmas Show at Fort Dodge, Iowa.



Milton Herriott, William "Hopalong Cassidy" Boyd and John Herriott on Cole Bros. Circus in 1950. John Herriott collection.

In January of 1941 Milton was concluding three weeks of Christmas dates in Iowa and Minnesota with his dogs and ponies and was planning to present his Punch and Judy show, a whip act and a pickout pony at a number of small indoor dates. Also, for the first time, he planned to break his own animal acts to present for the next season. His two children would work in these acts.

At early ages Milton and Violet's children had duties with circus performances. Jean as a toddler of one year was seen with a dog act. When she was 8 years old she was working on a swinging ladder. Later she worked with elephants and in 1944 was a manege rider and did whip cracking in the concert on Al G. Kelly & Miller Bros. Circus. However, by the time of her marriage in 1947 to James Gustafson she had retired from the circus ring.

On the other hand, John continued to work with his father and by the age of 11 was riding manege and was working with a riding dog and monkey on Mills Bros. Circus. By that time he was fully launched into his lifelong circus career.

By 1942 Milton had sold all his animals to Mills Bros. Circus and he was on that show as equestrian director and announcer with dog, manege and riding dog and monkey acts. He also did whip cracking in the concert, which was headed by Clyde Weidner. Due to poor health, he had to leave the show in August of that year and return to his home in Minnesota. He rejoined Mills Bros. in May of 1943 as equestrian director and horse trainer.

During the next decade, the careers of father and son roughly paralleled each other. (See Table I) After passing the climax of his career in 1947, Milton was gradually approaching retirement as John was gathering experience and be-

coming firmly established as a trainer and performer.

On Al G. Kelly & Miller Bros. Milton served as equestrian director and manege rider as well as presenter of liberty horses and ponies, riding monkeys, a single liberty horse and an elephant act. John, age thirteen, rode manege, performed with elephants and had a liberty pony act. Incidentally in this connection, it is a matter of interest that Laura in 1994 appeared on Carson & Barnes Circus in the responsible position of performance director. With her son, John Walker III, she regularly presented liberty horses. All of this took place exactly fifty years after her grandfather had held a similar position on Al G. Kelly & Miller Bros. Circus. Here was the fulfillment of four generations of Herriotts performing on a Dory Miller circus.

Milton went to Cole Bros. Circus, performing with liberty horses and riding high school and gaited horses. In 1947 he made a tour with the Cole Bros. Palomino liberty stallions for Orrin Davenport. This was at the time that Paul Nelson, who usually worked the animals, had lost his leg in a shooting accident. He also took the liberty horses and ponies on Shrine dates in St. Paul, Cleveland, Columbus and Kansas City. In addition, for a couple of years, he trained stock including a six horse liberty act, midget mules, a four pony drill, manege horses, etc. for the businessmen, Evans & Stark, at their ring barn in Mystic, Iowa. Some of this stock went to the Strates carnival. The liberty horses were taken over by Jimmy O'Dell.

At Wabasha, Minnesota, Milton was manager of Bill Bloomberg's Livestock Exchange. There he trained a black, white and brown Mo-

rocco liberty horse act and a midget pony.

On Jay Gould's Million Dollar Circus, which incorporated free acts and a carnival, John rode high school on Silver Lady and Milt had Jelly, the comedy mule. John left the circus early that season, went back to the Exchange where he continued training a spotted liberty act and eventually was on Bill Bloomberg's Wild West which appeared at fairs.

John returned to Al G. Kelly & Miller Bros. where he sold banners with Buck Reger while Milton was spending time resting at home.

In 1950, the year that Cole Bros. Circus closed under canvas in Pennsylvania, Milton had the center ring liberty act of 8 horses and a pony while John and Capt. John Smith presented the two end ring liberty acts of seven and eight horses, respectively. When Jackie Lewis was injured during rehearsal in riding the sixteen Palomino hitch, young Johnny Herriott filled in until Georgia Sweet became the permanent replacement. Still in charge of horses when the circus closed at Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, father and son horse and pony trainers returned to quarters at St. Louis. Later that year John went with the International Dairy Exhibition Big Circus.

The next year both Milton and John were on Cole Bros. at the Chicago Stadium where Milton was equestrian director and both he and John again presented liberty horses. Following that date they went with a Cole Bros. unit that appeared on the World of Mirth

John and Milton Herriott on King Bros. Circus in 1954. John Herriott collection.



carnival. Paul Nelson came from Mills Bros. Circus to manage the unit.

Subsequently in 1951, John and Milton were operating a taxi cab company in St. Peter, Minnesota. John entered the army and served in Korea until July 1952 when he was discharged because his father had become paralyzed and the son was needed at home to conduct the business.

Upon his recovery, Milton went to Peru, Indiana to train stock for Cole Bros. Circus before the 1953 Chicago Stadium date. Liberty acts were put in shape by Milton, Henry Crowell (John Smith was now retired) and John Herriott. Henry Crowell, a former Clyde Beatty employee, also worked with Eddie Hendricks in a bareback act. When the show opened in Chicago, it was also called Barnes Bros. Circus. At this time Milton went back to Peru, Indiana. He had been appointed manager of the Cole Bros. Circus Corporation.

That year Milton took out a fair unit for Barnes-Carruthers known as Barnes Bros. Three elephants were on this unit which again went on the World of Mirth Shows. During this time John first attended business college and then in the fall substituted on Shrine dates. Milton later hired Bert Pettus to work the elephants and John stayed at Peru as a horse trainer.

In 1954 John presented a liberty horse act on the Orrin Davenport indoor circus at Cleveland and Detroit. He took the checkerboard liberty act to Buffalo and also had a pony drill for the Shrine acts. He had a sorrel liberty act at the Cincinnati Shrine date.

Later in the spring, John went to King Bros. Circus where he opened with a Palomino liberty act. Cole Bros. had sold this act along with the 101 Ranch herd of five elephants to King Bros. These were the elephants which Eddie and Jean Allen had made famous on the Cole show. Milton was also on King Bros. at first and then took a liberty act and elephants on a fair unit with Barnes-Carruthers. In the fall he finished in California where the movie *Jupiter's Darling* was being filmed. John was there also and, with Bert Pettus, had elephants in that movie. Texas Shrine dates followed for Milton, John and Lou Regan.

The end of the 1954 season brought Milton Herriott's circus career essentially to a close. Suffering from chronic poor health, he died eight years later on September 22, 1962.

John and Mary Ruth James met on King Bros. Circus in



John Herriott with the Gil Gray llama act at Disneyland in 1956. Pfening Archives.

1954. At the end of the season she visited in Ft. Worth, Texas. They were married in the circus ring of the Shrine circus there.

With an innate love of horses, Mary Ruth's early equestrian experience was in 1951-1952 with Cal and Ruth Thompson's White Horse Troupe from Naper, Nebraska. There she perfected Roman standing trick riding and hurdle riding.

During the season of 1952 she was with the Tom Packs Circus and in 1953

John Herriott with a liberty horse on Mills Bros. in 1962. Pfening Archives.



1954. At the end of the season joined the King Bros. & Cristiani Circus. There she did trick riding, Roman ladders and web and met the versatile Barbara Fairchild as well as Eloise Berhold, who then rode in a cage with a lion and worked snakes. This was the last season for this show which was under the proprietorship of Floyd King and Lucio Cristiani.

On King Bros. Circus in 1954 she added elephants to the acts she had presented during the previous year. King Bros. Circus, the outgrowth of the King-Cristiani show, was owned by Floyd King and Arnold Maley. It was destined to tour for three seasons under their ownership. It became a very large motorized circus and eventually travelled as two separate units in 1955.

After their marriage in 1954, for several years John and Mary Ruth did not appear on the same shows.

While John was on the Gil Gray International Circus until the fall of 1959, Mary Ruth worked on a succession of circuses: Bailey-Cristiani in 1955, Clyde Beatty Circus in 1956, Gil Gray late in 1956, then the Texas dates of Jack Moore's Tex Carson (forerunner of Carson & Barnes) and finally Cristiani Bros. Circus in 1959. Eventually she rejoined the Gil Gray organization.

Mary Ruth presented her first liberty horse act in 1955. In 1956 on Clyde Beatty she had a pony drill. On Gil Gray she also performed with elephants in a joint act with John.

In the meanwhile, John joined Gil Gray, going to San Angelo, Texas where he broke a camel act, a three baby elephant act and llamas.

His landmark exotic animal act on that show consisted of two camels, two guanacos, two buckskin quarter horses, a mouflon sheep (a cross between sheep and goat) and a rhesus monkey. The monkey rode on the back of the sheep which was taught to jump over the camels. In this act John wore a Hindu turban. Although similar in format to an act he presented later on Mills Bros. in 1961 and 1962, the later act consisted exclusively of camels, llamas and ponies and with it John wore a legionnaire type of kepi. On the Gill Gray Circus, he also worked a three elephant act.

After leaving Gil Gray in the fall of 1959, John went to Hunt Bros. for two months where he broke a six horse liberty act consisting of six half quarter and half Arab bred horses. Also, before going to Clyde Bros. Cir-

cus in 1960, he worked Swede Fuller's Golden Retrievers for a short period of time.

On Howard Suesz's ball park circus, John and Mary Ruth rode manege and he presented liberty horses. That fall he went back to the Gil Gray quarters where he hoped to take his camel act over to Polack Bros, but that deal did not materialize.

On Mills Bros. Circus for the next two years, John worked an act consisting of camels, llamas and a pony; trained horses; had a liberty act and announced. Jack Mills had bought the camel act from Gil Gray. The Mills Bros. liberty act consisted of seven sorrels, five blacks and one buckskin horse. Mary Ruth worked liberty horses and ponies on Mills Bros. while John served as equestrian director and superintendent of ring stock. During the Christmas season of 1961 the Herriotts accompanied Jack Mills on a tour of European circuses.

While associated with Mills Bros., John presented a center ring camel act at the Detroit and the Cincinnati Shrine shows and broke a twelve horse liberty act. The camel is about as intelligent as a horse but it is "physically unable to rear on its hind legs or jump over a high hurdle." Its physical structure and coordination are such that it is no wonder that someone once said that a camel is a horse that was put together by a committee.

In 1963 the Herriotts, and their four daughters aged seven months to seven years, went to the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin. They re-

Mary Ruth Herriott's trapeze act at the Circus World Museum. Pfenig Archives.



Mary Ruth and John Herriott with three baby elephants at the Circus World Museum in 1963. Pfenig Archives.

mained there for seven seasons until the fall of 1969.

John's initial assignment was to produce circus performances that would give the spectators the flavor of the old time circus rather than to just entertain the audience. This presentation would also feature an early style circus street parade.

In addition to their own dog and pony acts, the Herriotts worked the animals of the A & D Circus Corporation, owned by Dean Adams, a Madison, Wisconsin businessman and liberty horse hobbyist, and Wilbur Deppe, a prominent Baraboo businessman.

The stock consisted of a twelve pony liberty act, believed to be the largest such group then showing in the U.S.A., a high school horse named American Anthem and three baby Indian elephants, eventually known as Eva, Topsy and Toby.

The ponies did a classic complete routine of waltzes and ring curb marches and the climax of the elephant act came when they all trumpeted in unison. John skillfully injected humor into the acts in line with old circus traditions.

In addition to working with the elephants and her poodle and pony circus, Mary Ruth also did a flying web act.

As the children grew older they received their introductions to show business at the Museum. They appeared on the grounds in the daily street parade that consisted of pony drawn cage wagons and a buggy as well as American Anthem, Lloyd the llama, and the three baby elephants.

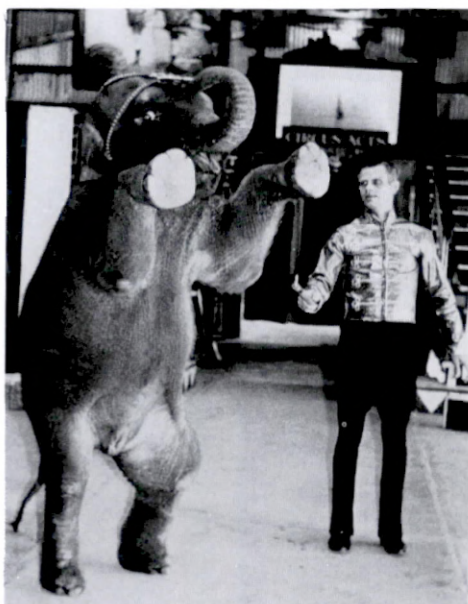
During the winter and spring months,

the Herriotts performed with the liberty ponies and elephants at Shrine circuses in a variety of cities such as Lewiston, Maine; San Antonio and Austin, Texas; Utica, New York; Cincinnati, Ohio and Indianapolis, Indiana as well as the Grotto Circus in Cleveland.

In October of 1969 it was announced that the Herriotts would join the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Red Unit for the 1970 season. Going to the Big Show with them were the liberty ponies, the three elephants and American Anthem. John served as assistant performance director and Mary Ruth presented her pony and poodle circus as well as dressage and liberty horse acts.

In 1971 season they transferred to the Ringling-Barnum Blue Unit, which that year had Dickie Chipperfield and his leopards from England as well as Charly Baumann and his tigers. This was also about the last year for Otto Griebing who was in severely failing health. John continued as performance director and presented liberty camel and liberty horse acts as well. Mary Ruth had her pony and poodles and also worked a liberty horse act. My wife Rosalie and I had the opportunity to visit extensively that year when the show played for a week at an arena at the Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. We were also invited to a party in the Herriott quarters on the circus train where we informally met many of the artists on the circus.

John Herriott and Nellie at the Circus World Museum. Pfenig Archives.



During the next season John and Mary Ruth were on the Lashinsky Royal Lipizzan Wonderful World of Horses show for the months of January and February. They spent the bulk of that season on Hoxie Bros. Circus and at the very end, after closing with Hoxie, went to the Circus Hall of Fame in Sarasota. By then their home was in Sarasota. They had moved there when they joined the Ringling organization two years previously.

On Hoxie Bros. Mary Ruth worked her now famous poodle and pony revue which included the midget horse "Little Bit" which was a truly big time act. The music for this production was a medley consisting of *Beer Barrel Polka*, *Bye, Bye Blues*, *Chinatown* and *The Shiek of Araby*. For the climax, the high diving dog, the tune was *Over the Rainbow*.

John, assisted by Mary Ruth, had his elephant kindergarten act of four baby Asian elephants and two baby African elephants. This act, which he had put together during the preceding winter, had great appeal, especially for the children. It was a real winner. He also presented American Anthem, his saddle bred horse, which was then at the peak of its training and perfection.

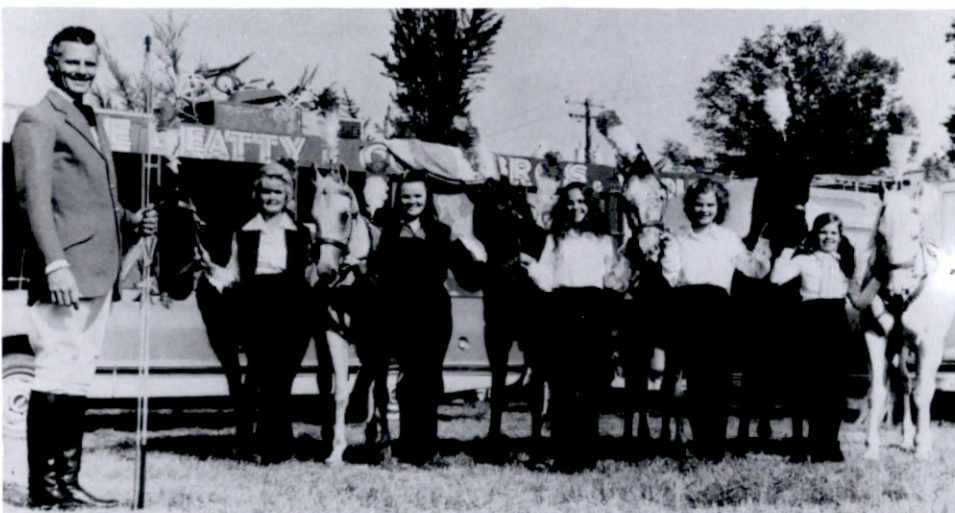
Mary Ruth presented a four horse liberty act in the center ring while her daughter Laura and Evy Karoly had military ponies in the end rings. She also rode dressage with the Karoly family and with Laura. In addition to the pony and horse acts, Laura performed on the swinging ladders.

In 1973 the Herriotts were featured with their trained animal circus at Storyland, U.S.A., Lake George, New York. Later, they closed the season with Hoxie Bros. in Ohio.

After a date in Puerto Rico in 1974, they returned to the States. That year we had the opportunity to again visit with them on Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus in Frederick and Hagerstown, Maryland and later in Zanesville, Ohio. John with his usual precision presented the liberty horses and Mary Ruth performed with her dog and pony act.

The season of 1975 found the family first at the Circus Hall of Fame in Sarasota. Later that year they were on both Hoxie Bros. and Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. On Hoxie John was performance director, rode his dressage act and worked a liberty horse act as well as an elephant act. Mary Ruth had her specialty and by this time Laura, Cindy and Heidi were all appearing in aerial numbers. Following these tours, they played the New Orleans Shrine show and finished the year with a date in Venezuela.

At the end of the year this happy family moved into a new home on Prospect Road in Sarasota. In addition to an at-



The John Herriott family on Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus in 1980. John Herriott collection.

tractive home on the property, there was an ample barn for the animals and an excellent outdoor training ring.

In tribute to John's very successful career the John Herriott Tent No. 101 of the Circus Fans of America was formed in April of 1962 at Newburgh-Poughkeepsie, New York. Because of continued appreciation for his talents, at the very beginning of 1976 this tent was completely reorganized. That spring John was also feted at the Sarasota fair.

In addition to playing dates, they were on two circuses, both of which were destined to permanently close that season. One was George Matthews Great London Circus (1972-1976) and

John Herriott on Hoxie Bros. Circus in 1975. Pfening Archives.



the other was Ralph Schappacher's Diamond S Rodeo & Wild West (1973-1976). After 1976 the various members of the family did not appear regularly on the same show during a given season. However, on a number of occasions, the daughters did join with their parents for certain dates or occasions. (See Table II)

The Herriotts returned to the Circus World Museum in 1980 after a decade's absence. This was a summer of particular joy for my wife and myself. In addition to enjoying their performances there, on numerous occasions I had the good fortune to chat with John. He ranged through topics as varied as great trainers, both distant and more recent, to accounts concerning animal psychology and training. That year at the Museum he conducted daily lecture demonstrations of liberty and high school horse training in the center ring.

In his characteristic relaxed manner he pointed out how animals respond to a particular musical chord or to applause. If the band strikes the "tada" for the bow too early, they will quit the routine they are doing and give a bow. Also, knowing that applause comes at the end, they respond in exactly the same way when they hear it. Animals that are less intelligent are easier to train more precisely than those that are more intelligent and know how to cheat on what they are supposed to be doing.

He indicated that liberty horses are far more comfortable trotting in the ring in a counter clock wise direction presenting their left sides to the trainer. This is apparently associated with the fact that saddle horses are always mounted from the left or "near" side. Incidentally, liberty horses should never canter.

To be properly trained, liberty horses must be required from the beginning to turn toward the trainer and to always line up facing the trainer. A properly trained liberty horse will not want to



Aerial view of the Herriott Family Circus in 1986. John Herriott collection.

dash out of the ring because he will be very uncomfortable on the outside. If he does get out of the ring, he will want to return immediately to an environment that is more friendly to him.

When liberty horses are running abreast, either in 2's or 4's, etc., they are not exactly even nose to nose. Rather, proceeding from the outside to the inside of the ring, each horse should be at least a half head or more back of the one to its immediate right. In this way the trainer at the center of the ring can see each individual horse's eye and each horse can see the trainer.

Liberty ponies are more difficult to train than horses because, being much faster, they can duck out more quickly.

In order to prevent animals from begging, they are never fed during the performance. If they are not thinking about food, they are more alert to what they are supposed to be doing. Any reward, such as a carrot, is always given after they leave the ring.

Liberty horse training requires two whips. They are a mere extension of the trainer's arms and permit him to direct and cue the animals in their routines. They are not used to strike the animal. The horse must learn to accept the whip, not to defy it and try to turn away. When mistakes are made, the animal must be made to immediately go back and repeat the routine until it is executed correctly. Performing horses should not be allowed to act on anticipation but rather they must perform in response to definite commands or cues.

In discussing high school horses, those horses which are developed to the highest level of learning (Haute Ecole) above that of either dressage or manège, John indicated that the best breed is the standard thoroughbred. Either Arabians or Lipizzans are certainly intelligent enough to be used for high school work. However, in the former case some precision is lost because the

animal is smaller and its movements are too quick. The somewhat blocky shape of the Lipizzan causes some lack in the ultimate gracefulness that is usually associated with the fluidity and majesty of movement of the perfected high school routine.

And so, with extreme patience, John would take spare moments to discuss, explain and answer questions that came to my mind as I read circus equestrian history. The marvel of it was that he could do all of this in such an enjoyable manner. Going back over tapes of some of our conversations has provided me with many pleasant and valuable memories.

In 1981 John, Mary Ruth and Christine returned to the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus. With John riding in the center ring, they presented a series of highly schooled dressage steps utilizing all three rings. Their costumes were precisely tailored, turquoise colored and glittered in the style of Argentinean gauchos. In three seasons on Beatty-Cole their themes had gone from Spanish Flamenco to disco and finally to patriotic Western. Their horses were put through complex and graceful steps in the 42 foot rings, including a cantering side pass, changes of lead, cantering volte and a piaf. In the grand finale when all the performers took their bows, John cantered twice around the track on Apache Bandolero carrying the American flag. It was a moving moment as the band played *Yankee Doodle Dandy* and the audience came to its feet applauding.

As we look at the circus careers of this remarkable family, we sense a warm nostalgia that is best summarized in John's "Old Showman's Heaven," written some three decades ago:

"I dreamed I was there in the Old

Showman's Heaven, Oh, what a beautiful sight. Yes, the other night I dreamed I went up there to the Old Showman's Heaven and do you know who was there to greet me--the old barker himself, Windy Van Hooten. He welcomed us into the beautiful marquee made of solid silk and on into the Big Top. It was a grand sight and a Big Top I had always heard about. The one from the Windy Van Hooten Show had solid gold side poles and quarter poles, and the glass center poles filled with water and Gold fish swimming round in them. It was a solid silver cable top covered with pure Japanese silk."

Then, after giving a roster of fabulous performers of the past, he continued,

"Out in front on the midway I passed the steam calliope. It was between shows and just getting dusk. Guess what, up there was Tommy Comstock just starting to play his evening calliope concert. I saw a large group of Billboards facing the lot and on them were date sheets and names printed in solid gold leaf scroll. I asked Col. Harry (Thomas) what it was and he said it was the Big Tally of those who would be joining up within the next hundred years or so."

Table I

1944
Milton and John with Al G. Kelly & Miller Bros. Circus.
1945
Milton with Cole Bros. Circus, John at home.
1946
Milton and John with Jay Gould's Million Dollar Circus and Bill Bloomberg's Livestock Exchange, Milton as manager.
1947
Milton with Cole Bros. Circus and Shrine dates. John with Bill Bloomberg's wild west playing fairs.
1948
Milton at home. John with Al G. Kelly & Miller Bros. Circus.
1949
Milton at home.
1950
Milton with Cole Bros. Circus. John with Cole Bros. Circus and the International Dairy Exchange Circus.
1951
Milton and John with Cole Bros. Circus at the Chicago Stadium, Cole Bros. unit on World of Mirth Shows (had taxi company). John entered Army.
1952
Milton suffered stroke and paralysis. John discharged from Army because of father's disability.
1953
Milton recovered from stroke and played Cole Bros. Circus and Shrine Circus dates. John attended business

college, played Shrine sates and trained horses in Peru, Indiana.

1954

Milton with King Bros. Circus and played Texas Shrine dates. John with King Bros. Circus, Gil Gray Circus and Texas Shrine dates.

Table II

1977

John and Cindy, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey (Red unit). John, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Thrill Circus at Ohio State Fair. John, Cindy, Laura and Heidi, Hoxie Bros. Mary Ruth & Christine, Carden Johnson & Clyde Bros., Hoxie's Great American Circus, Hunt Bros., Stebbing's Circus. Mary Ruth and Christine, Circus Odyssey.

1978

John, Mary Ruth and Cindy, Circus World, Barnum City, Florida. Laura, Hoxie Bros., Ron Morris Circus.

1979

John, Mary Ruth and Cindy, Circus Vargas. Cindy and Heidi, Royal Hanneford Circus. Laura, Carden-Johnson Circus, Carson & Barnes Circus. John, Shrine dates, Atayde Bros. (Mexico).

1980

John, Atayde Bros. (Mexico). John, Mary Ruth, Cindy, Heidi and Christine, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin. John and Mary Ruth, Shrine dates, Smithsonian Institution Special Celebration, Stebbing Circus, Coronas. John, Mary Ruth and Christine, Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. (including Beatty-Cole fall indoor circus). John, Cindy and Heidi, Royal Hanneford Circus. John, Mary Ruth and Christine, Carden-Johnson. Heidi, Cindy and Christine, Shrine circuses. Laura, Carson & Barnes Circus.

1981

John, Big Apple Circus. John, Mary Ruth, Cindy, Christine and Heidi, Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus. Laura, Carson & Barnes Circus. John, Mary Ruth and Christine, Stebbing's Circus. Heidi, Shrine shows.

1982

John, Mary Ruth, Hanneford, Smithsonian "Spring Celebration." John, Mary Ruth and Christine, Hoxie Bros., Big Apple Circus. John, Cindy, Christine and Heidi, Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus. Christine, Royal Hanneford Circus. Heidi, Polack Bros.

1983

Mary Ruth, Caesar's Circus Maximus (Atlantic City). John, Roger Brown's World of Miniature Horses, Pompano Beach, Florida; Hanneford Family Circus. Cindy and Christine, Hoxie's Great American Circus. Heidi, Big Apple Circus. Laura, Coronas, Zerbini, Circus Europa (Alberto Zoppe). John, Mary Ruth,

Laura and Heidi, Shrine circuses. John, Lewis Bros. Circus.

1984

John, Mary Ruth, Christine and Cindy, Herriott Trained Animal Circus. Cindy, International All Star Circus (Nordmark), Big Apple Circus. Laura, Roberts Bros. Circus. Heidi, Wayne McCary's Circus, Big Apple Circus (member of James Zoppe troupe), Shrines circuses. Christine, Big Apple Circus.



Ringmaster and announcer John Herriott at Windjammer-Sailor Circus, Sarasota, Florida, January 29, 1995. Fred Pfening, Jr. Photo.

1985

John, Mary Ruth, Laura, Cindy and Christine, Herriott Trained Animal Circus. Cindy, International All Star Circus (Nordmark). Christine, Royal American Circus; James M. Cole Circus. John, trained camel, zebra, llama act for Toby Tyler Circus. John, Laura, Cindy and Christine, International Showmen's Association Circus at Gibsonton, Florida. Heidi, Big Apple Circus; Circus USA (Alan Hill). John, Mary Ruth and Heidi, Shrine circuses.

1986

John, Mary Ruth and Cindy, Herriott Trained Animal Circus. Cindy, Royal Hanneford Circus, Toby Tyler Circus, Cole All Star Circus. Heidi, Circus Flora; Eastern States Exposition (Springfield, Massachusetts). John and Christine, Royal Hanneford Circus. Laura, Toby Tyler Circus.

1987

John, Olympic International Circus. John and Christine, Shrine dates. Cindy, Cole All Star Circus, Vidbel's

Old Tyme Circus, Herriott Family Circus, Texas Shrine dates. Laura, Toby Tyler Circus.

1988

Cindy, Garden Bros. Circus, Shrine circuses. John and Cindy, Ringling-Barnum (gold unit) in Japan (summer). Mary Ruth and Heidi, Herriott Trained Animal Circus, fair dates. John and Mary Ruth, Shrine dates. Heidi, George Hubler Circus. Laura, Coronas, Tarzan Zerbini Circus.

1989

John, Mary Ruth, Cindy, Heidi, Christine and Laura, Land of Little Horses, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. John, Detroit Shrine, ringmaster on horse back, trainer for Arabian Nights Dinner Theater, Kissimmee, Florida. Laura and Cindy, Shrine dates. Heidi, Arabian Nights Show, Shrine shows, Wayne McCary Circus. Mary Ruth, Laura and Cindy, fairs with Herriott Circus. Cindy, Olympic International Circus, Phillips Bros. Circus, Wayne McCary's Circus, Garden Bros. Circus, M & M Circus. Christine, Arabian Nights Show.

1990

John and Mary Ruth, Land of Little Horses, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. John, ringmaster at Shrine shows, horse trainer at Arabian Nights Dinner Theater. Heidi, Arabian Nights Dinner Theater. Cindy, Roy Wells Elephant show at Dells Crossroads Park (Jim Grogan), Garden Bros. Circus, Moslah Shrine. Laura, Carson & Barnes.

1991

John and Christine, Virginia State Fair (1st half). John and Mary Ruth, Land of Little Horses, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Cindy, Bob Snowden Circus (Caracas, Venezuela), Circus America, Hamid-Morton Circus; Circus Italiano (in San Juan, Puerto Rico). Hadi Shrine, Ft. Worth Shrine. Mary Ruth, Virginia State Fair (2nd half). Heidi, Hadi Shrine Show, Beeman Bros. Christine, Circus Valentine.

1992

Cindy, Circus America, Hamid-Morton Circus, Wade carnival, Canadian fairs, Circus of the Stars, Shrine dates.

1993

John, The Great Circus Parade, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Cindy, Circus America, Jeanette Williams, Wade carnival, Peru, Indiana Circus Festival, Paul Kaye Circus (Honolulu). Shrine dates and fairs.

1994

Laura, Carson & Barnes Circus (performance director). John, Mary Ruth and Christine, The Great Circus Parade, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Plunkett Bros. Circus. Cindy, Kelly-Miller Circus.

A number of years ago Bandwagon published two articles by the late John M. Staley from his unpublished book. Bandwagon recently acquired the full manuscript and will publish additional parts of it in coming issues. Staley died November 28, 1973.

The Clyde Beatty Circus closed early on September 27, 1955 at Clovis, New Mexico. Business had been spotty for the last three or four weeks. We had our share of rain, wind, and it seemed we were always short of workmen.

The circus train was loaded and routed to the winter quarters in Deming, New Mexico. Mrs. Staley and I stayed over at a local hotel and departed the next afternoon via Pullman to our home in Sarasota.

At home we were early birds to bed and up at the crack of dawn. We were use to that routine on the circus. That stayed with us at home. Late one night the telephone rang constantly. I knew for sure that the call was not for us, so let it ring. It seemed the party on the other end would not give up. I rolled out of bed, grabbed the receiver and said, "the city jail." It turned out to be a long distance call, person to person. Sure enough the call was for me from Jack Burslem, head porter of the sleeping cars on the Ringling Bros & Barnum and Bailey Circus.

Jack said he was calling for John Ringling North. Would I be interested in having complete charge of the cookhouse, and if so he would like for me to fly out and take over. The show was leaving Houston and would be in Galveston, October 10; Beaumont, October 18; and St. Charles, Louisiana, October 19.

After Jack had talked himself dry about the cookhouse, I said, "Jack, I have been home only a short while and we had a darn hard season on the Beatty show. Tell Mr. North if the offer still holds when the circus returns to winter quarters to call me." I thanked Jack for calling and asked him to give my best regards to Johnny North. I hung up.

I never gave the Ringling show another thought until I had a call on December 7th from Frank Orman, manager of the Beatty show. He wanted to know when I was coming out to winter quarters. He was lining up his staff. Could he be of any help in getting needed supplies for making repairs and building new equipment. He asked that I let him know as soon as possible about what time I would start west to Deming.

The first of December was too early to

THE CIRCUS STEWARD RINGLING-BARNUM'S COOKHOUSE IN 1956

By John M. Staley

be thinking of the next season under canvas, with hot and cold days, and hardly any other days in between. Then too the Ringling show had only been in quarters since December 4. I did not go out to visit. I had made a sneaky visit in St. Petersburg and gave the circus the once over. I was stalling my answer to Frank Orman, sort of expecting some word from Mr. North.

I did not have a long wait. I will never forget the day and date. It was the afternoon of December 7. The phone rang and the caller wanted to know if I was "Johnnie" Staley. When I replied yes, he said, "I am John Ringling North." If I was interested in operating the cookhouse of his circus he would set a time

John M. Staley in the 1956 Ringling-Barnum cookhouse kitchen. All photos are from the Pfening Archives.



to have a chat at his office at quarters? Knowing he kept late business hours like his Uncle John, I replied how about five o'clock the next afternoon. It was agreeable with him.

I drove out toward quarters the next afternoon. It was about four thirty so I parked at Johnnie Lowe's lunch stand across the street from the front gate of quarters. To settle my nerves I had a beer or two and chatted with some show hands at the outdoor counter. I didn't want to reach Mr. North's office early. I wanted to walk into his office exactly at five o'clock exactly on the dot.

Johnnie and Buddy North were the only two in the office. After passing the time of day and reminiscing of days gone by about my working on his Uncle Charles' yacht and the years I was the private cookhouse waiter for the Ringling and North families, he came to the point. He needed someone to operate his cookhouse. Really, the cookhouse needed a steward. He said he had heard good reports of my operations on other circuses.

Without any bargaining he offered me ten thousand dollars the first year. If I showed good results and kept the expenses within reason, he would add four grand the second year. He also said if the show had a good season he would see that I received a bonus when the circus closed. Also included in the deal was a huge double stateroom that took up the better quarters of the bull man car.

I asked him about winter quarters. Would I have to be there each day of the week. He replied when I took over the steward's position then everything connected with the cookhouse, both winter and summer, were my babies. But, he did suggest it would be a good idea to have a man in charge of quarters and that I would only have to drop in every so often to check on the bills and meals. The rest of the time I could go fishing or stroll on the beach.

Before accepting the position I asked him if I was in complete charge. He replied he was hiring me and I had to answer to him. I said, "you have your boy." Then in the next breath I asked for a contract. He sort of looked a little cross eyed and told me his word was as good or better than a contract. That was the last time I saw North until the circus closed.

Word quickly leaked out that I had taken over the cookhouse. I had only been in charge a few days when I learned that North's hiring me went against the grain of the circus management. They had other people in

mind. They felt North had jumped the gun in hiring me before they could put in their two cents worth of advice of who would be best suited for cookhouse steward.

The cookhouse of the Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey circus on the road was a major operation. At least there was the man power required to make the operation run smoothly, at least most of the time.

The commissary department broke down into branches. The kitchen had a chef and twenty-two men. The head waiter in the short end of the dining tent for performers had twenty-four men. The head waiter in the long end for workingmen had thirty-eight men. The head waiter in the Negro dining tent had twelve men. The head dishwasher had ten men. One man had charge of the front door. There was one downtown man. One man had charge of the grocery wagon. There were two bakers, two butchers and a generator man for the cookhouse light plant.

The cookhouse department on Ringling was the largest of the more than twenty separate departments. In the late 1930s and 1940s the big top crew had more men. But that was before the circus had Art Concello's seat wagons. The baggage stock men were then the third largest department.

The Ringling dining department had so many out moded regulations that at times you wondered how such a large organization could move so smoothly day after day.

Alfred "Ollie" Webb had been Ringling Bros. steward for many years before it was combined with the Barnum show. He continued as steward of the

The Ringling-Barnum cookhouse light plant wagon No. 2.



The nineteen foot automatic dishwasher was wagon No. 6.

Ringling-Barnum show until his death in 1934.

There have been three great cookhouse stewards in the past sixty years. Charles Henry of the Barnum show, "Laughing" George Davis of Cole Bros., and Alfred Lacy Webb, the dean of all circus stewards. Webb was known to all followers of the billowing white tops as the monarch and majordomo in all the circus world.

Webb was a shrewd buyer of meat and foods. Many a time I have gone to town with him. Or if he had been away on a buying trip I would meet him with a list of items needed that day at one of the Armour branch houses. As soon as the circus train arrived in a town, no matter how early, you can be sure the Armour branch manager would have a crew awaiting the arrival of Mr. Webb. Many a time I would go into the cooler with him as he went down the aisles of meat hanging on hooks. He would pick the quarters, rounds and sides of beef he wanted. One of the men would tag the meat. Ever so often we would come into contact with a new Armour manager that didn't know Ollie Webb and his ways. The manager would try to suggest items of meat that the old man was not interested in. After a while Webb would stop what he was doing and give the new man a piece of his mind. A lacing down that would not be heard in

church. Finally telling the new manager he knew exactly what he wanted. That no doubt he was a buyer of meat before the man was born. If he did not stop hounding him around he would walk out and not buy one pound of meat.

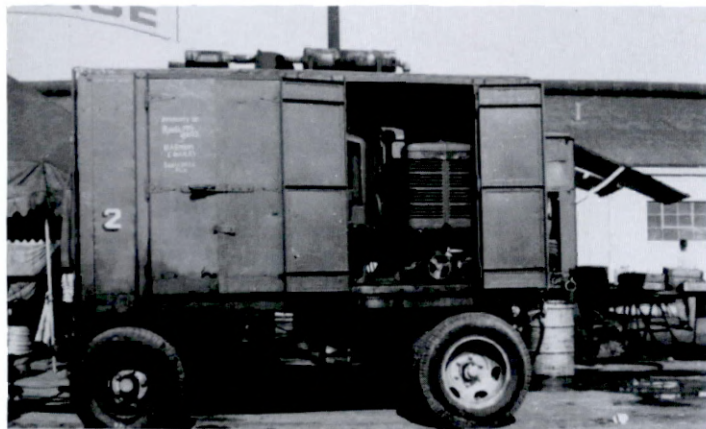
Webb knew that what he said would

not set so good for the local agent or sales manager, nor at the home office of Armour & Company. The local Armour representative had received a letter from the general office in Chicago. In affect the local man was advised the Ringling-Barnum Circus would exhibit in his city on a certain date and roughly the kind and amount of meat that might be needed for that day. This allowed the local manager to order extra amounts to take care of the circus requirements. So if Webb had walked out that morning without buying one pound, as he had threatened, the local manager would have a big headache trying to sell the extra meat he had ordered. I have known of an Armour branch manager losing his job after I had sent a hot wire to the Chicago office from Webb.

After I had taken charge of the cookhouse Ollie Webb was my idol. He had been my monitor from the first day I was employed in the cookhouse. I was one of his boys. He was always fatherly to me. He gave me sound advice whenever I did anything that was not kosher. Right or wrong, he was always there to help.

I will never forget when I was headwaiter on the workingmen's side of the dining tent. In those days we served between 1,200 and 1,300 meals at each sitting. I was selling bottled beer in my rest tent outside the cookhouse. The

Range wagons No. 7 and No. 3 under the kitchen tent.





men were not allow to take any bottles outside my tent, certainly never into the dining tent. I had one of my favorite men operating the "Blue Room." He received a salary from the circus and I paid him each week to take care of that end for me. One day I walked past the staff tables as Carl Hathaway, circus manager, was getting up from the table. He always called me Johnnie, most of the staff had called me by that name since I was staff waiter on the Barnum & Bailey Circus in 1917.

He called to me that he wanted a word. It did not take him long to make his point. He said that I had been on the circus for a good many years and that I was well liked and had never caused any trouble. But, unless I stopped selling beer to the workingmen he would have to discharge me. I answered, "Mr. Hathaway, I work for Mr. Webb and whatever he says that is what I do. I will tell him of our talk and then let him decide what I should do." With that I walked away and went back to my side of the dividing curtain that kept the performers and white collar people from seeing the workingmen eat.

Later that day I talked to Mr. Webb about what Hathaway had said. He must have heard about the conversation ahead of me as he seemed a little hot under the collar. He said, "Johnnie, I will tell you when to stop selling beer and not to listen to anyone else." I sold beer that season until the show closed.

One day I was passing the time of day with a fellow I considered a friend. I was trying to get his opinion about me getting the cookhouse. Somewhere in

The No. 4 refrigerator wagon was for meat and food storage.

Black waiters serving the workingmen's long side of the dining tent.

the conversation I said that before the circus returned to quarters the show no doubt would have a "checker board" cookhouse meaning that I would use black waiters. He was taken aback by my remark, saying it had never been done before. He asked where would I sleep the extra Negroes as the cookhouse was only allotted so many berths for Negroes. Without batting an eyelash I replied it was very simple. All that was needed in the berth car was to move the partition one way or the other between the white and the blacks. In my experiences on other shows it was hard to get white help at times, and on other occasions, it was hard to get black help. As he started to walk away he said in so many words that if he had been in Mr. North's office at the time I was hired he would have put a stop to my crazy ideas and plans for the coming year.

In those years I was cocky and jobs did not mean a thing to me. I gave him a parting answer that I still could have the Beatty cookhouse. Orman was still waiting for my reply about coming to Deming. I told him that Mr. North had contacted me on the road and more recently at home to take over his cookhouse and to run it to the best of my abilities and that when North hired me I would do as I had said.

I told him that if he or anyone else did not like my way of doing they could always get themselves another boy. The Ringling-Barnum show management believed that the old ways of the circus were the best and resisted modernizing their circus long after other railroad circuses had made changes in the physical

aspects of the old time circus.

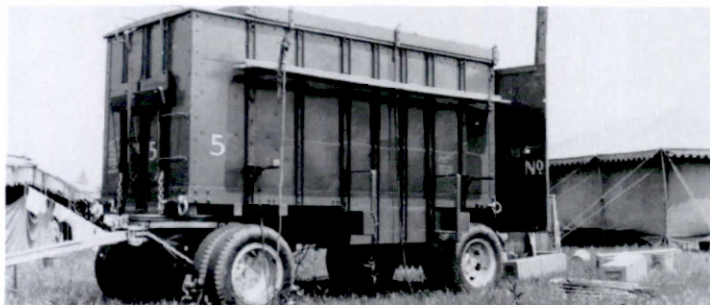
The Ringling cookhouse did not have an automatic dish washer until the typhoid fever epidemic hit the personnel of the circus during the summer of 1934. Modernization did not take place until the 1930s. They did away with the Volrath enamel dishes. They looked nice when they were new, but being bumped and thrown around in the dish washing section they were chipped and looked bedraggled. The enamel dishes were washed by hand in large tubs. I should say they were shaken instead of being washed. Large heavy duty dairy brushes were used on the dirtiest. After being washed the dishes were thrown on long tables, upside down. Then hot water was thrown over all. They were not dried one by one. The men took towels and rubbed over a pile of dishes. It was always a hit or miss operation. By the time the dishes had been washed for that meal the towels were more like wet wash rags. At that time the enamel dishes consisted of oval meat platters, vegetable dishes, soup bowls, dessert dishes, oblong deep vegetable dishes, syrup pitchers, tea pots, coffee pitchers, round salad bowls and saucers. Cups used by the workingmen were also enamel. The white collar folks had crockery cups. The entire personnel ate off crockery plates.

Electricity did not appear in the cookhouse until later years. The old wood burning ovens were replaced later with butane ovens and griddles.

It has taken me a long time to lead up to the innovations that I put into effect that last year of the circus under canvas, changing the staid and composed Ringling cookhouse that had so many settled antiquated ideas dating back to the turn of the century. Now that I think back to that fateful day I wonder how I ever got away with all my new fangled ideas. Probably, it was good that the circus only lasted thirty-eight days under canvas in 1956.

The 1956 season started on the wrong foot and was never able to get in step. At Madison Square Garden in New York we had trouble with the Teamsters union and the American Guild of

Cookhouse wagon No. 5 carried the dining and kitchen tents.



Variety Artists. It started the first day and never stopped until the closing in Pittsburgh.

Picket lines were the style of the day. It was not possible to receive any food in the Garden. The drivers would not cross the picket line. After a few fumbles I finally contacted a "drop" where all the supplies for the cookhouse were delivered. It was then picked up by a circus truck that could cross the line. The same was true in Boston. The Boston Garden had a tough picket line, so the circus rented a large building at Scully Square, about a mile from the Garden.

During the New York engagement I drew up a set of rules for the under canvas tour. I had the office type them up on circus stationery. I had Mike Burke, the executive director, and Lloyd Morgan, the manager, sign the rules. I also put my name down as steward.

When the show opened in Baltimore, Maryland on May 23 I had the framed set of rules hung on the curtain of the front door of the dining tent. I expected some complaints as there had never been rules posted in the Ringling cookhouse. Some were very put-out that they had to follow the rules. Others had been on the circus for umpteen years and thought the rules were ridiculous. Others had their own beefs. I referred these people to Mr. North or Mr. Burke. I had never had any fuss or complaints on any other circus about the rules.

"COOKHOUSE RULES

Breakfast 8 a.m. to 9 a.m.

Dinner 11:30 a.m. to 12:30

Supper 4 p.m. on

Side show supper 3:30 p. m.

"Breakfast will vary as to arrival and will be of one hour duration after the third section arrives in town.

"The seating arrangement of the performers side of the dining tent has been done with the cooperation of Robert Dover. At the opening of the circus you will be assigned a seat at a designated table. That will be your place for the entire season. Any changes must be made by the steward. At no time are you to sit at another table to eat or drink coffee.

"All meals in the dining tent will be governed by the 'Hotel' flag atop the dining tent. The blue flag will indicate that the dining tent or cookhouse is closed for that meal. No exceptions to this rule, unless in a business capacity for the circus.

"Any personnel bringing in guests, unless okayed by the office wagon or steward, will be charged 75 cents for adults and 50 cents for children.

"At all times you must enter the dining tent through the front door. Those coming under the sidewall or through the kitchen will be asked to go back the way you came in and then use the front

door. The reason for this is to allow the man in charge of the front door to keep track of the number of personnel having been served on the performers side of the dining tent.

"All personnel should be prompt to change and dress to have their supper in the cookhouse.

"No dogs or other pets allowed in the cookhouse during meal hours.

"Beer, wine or other intoxicating liquors are not allowed in the cookhouse at any time.

"At no time do we serve sandwiches or coffee between meals. There are grab joints for that purpose.

"Ladies shall be suitably dressed on entering the cookhouse. No shorts, halters, kimonos, play suits without a skirt. Midriffs or other shoddy dress are taboo.

"Men will enter the cookhouse in suitable attire. Undershirts, practice shorts or trunks are never allowed.

"At no time are you to take out sandwiches or other foods from the cookhouse. All food is based on cost plus.

"No dishes, silverware or food to be taken from the cookhouse without permission of the steward.

"Any suggestions will be appreciated at all times."

The first major project of mine was to place the black waiters in the performers end of the dining top. None of the old timers could remember having black waiters on the short side of the dining tent. I was doing something that had never done before. Believe me, I held my breath for a long time when I placed five black waiters that had worked for me on other shows. Believe it or not, I had only two complaints. One was uncalled for as the man had worked on shows with white and black waiters. I told him if he didn't like it, he could get his own food. With that I took the waiter off the table and all twelve bosses had to serve themselves. Later I received several complements about the black waiters. They were clean, neat and tidy. Their tables were always cleaner than most and all gave courteous and excellent service.

The next blockbuster was changing the long end for workingmen from waiter service to cafeteria. The men served themselves. It seemed a big venture and I was scared to start the change-over. I waited for a two day stand. After supper the first night I had the chef, the head waiter for the workingmen and the black head waiter to stay and we re-hashed the entire routine. After the prep session it seemed a cinch come the

next day. I was attempting something that had never been tried. From the beginning of the Ringling Bros. Circus all personnel had been served by waiters. When I was head waiter I had remarked a jillion times there was no justice. More food was wasted than the men would eat. After each meal, even if we were tearing down to move, I would have a crew of my men pick up all the food scraps, paper or bottles under each of the tables.

It was sickening at times to see so much good food wasted. Our worst meal was the mornings when they were served steak for breakfast. The men would pick up pail after pail of beef scraps. Some would only have a bite



A cook preparing hot cakes, a standard item on the breakfast menu.

taken out. Either it was too well done or too rare. The men would throw it under the table and send one of the waiters back for another piece. That might go on for at least three or five times. The skimmers and their helpers were the biggest offenders. Next was the train crew.

Without any fanfare or notice all the workingmen were herded from the front door to the steam tables. They were told they could have anything that was on the table. I had instructed the chef the night before to tell the steam table men how to load the plates. The first plate was to have an extra large serving. Then on seconds, not so much. There were a few bugs, but nothing compared to what I had expected. During the rush period we had two lines forming. One was for the first serving, the other for seconds who had to wait until the first platters had been served. Most of the men would not buck the line more than a few times. The tables were about eighty feet in length. So I added another forty or fifty feet of tables. The men did not hit the line more times than necessary. Cereal and dessert were served by the regular cereal and dessert men.

There was some grumbling, but not anything to worry about. No matter what you do there is always someone to find fault. You would not believe the saving of food that in past years had gone into the garbage pails. With the cafeteria going full force I did not cut down on the number of men as some wise guys had predicated. Then too the men did not have to work so hard as in previous years.

While still in the Garden I did not use a baker or butcher. I had plenty of time to outline my plans for under canvas. When we hit the road under canvas everything was running smoothly. No muss or fuss. All the bakery gods were supplied by the Ward Baking Company, except pies. Ward would order them for me through a local pie maker. We served individual cups of ice cream at least twice a week. I had berries, other fresh fruits, watermelons and canteloupe as soon as they hit the local market.

The change pleased the entire personnel. In years past it was sheet cakes, the next day pies. They had berries and watermelon in season, but not too often canteloupe and ice cream. It was a smart move as the year before I became steward circus bakers were a thing of the past, bakers like Pete Hayes, George Blood and the best baker to set foot in a circus kitchen, Archie Blood. It also eliminated space that was taken up by the baker and his helper.

My system worked out perfectly without a butcher and his helper. Like the baker, there were no more old time circus butchers. They would be on the job one day and the next on a drunk. Butchers were not dependable. Most of the time the chef would have to pitch in and get his own meat.

All meat delivered to the cookhouse was fabricated before it was delivered. Hamburger meal was ground, beef rounds were boned and sliced for Swiss steak. Rump rounds were boned, rolled and tied. Pork chops were cut four to the pound. We never served either top or bottom rounds for steaks. When I had steak for supper we would serve rib steaks, about ten to twelve ounces each. They too were cut, ready to serve. All roasts were boned, rolled and tied, even stew meat was boned and diced, ready to put in the pot. Sure it cost more, but in the long run I did not have any headaches about my butchers showing up for work. I also did not have the local health inspector breathing down my neck about the flies, meat dropping in the dirt or exposed to the weather.

Another innovation that was not popular with some of the big family was the doing away with the "caste" system. The performers and the blue collar tribe did

not eat in the cookhouse during the Garden engagement. They did not know I had been trying the plan to see if it was plausible. Starting in Baltimore during the fateful year of 1956 all the people connected with the circus would be served the same food. Be they workingmen, stars, staff or riff raff, there would be no special food or person. Any person who had ever been on Big Bertha knew that the staff table, second staff table, "star" table, ticket sellers and the bosses tables, had a choice of meats at times. Next in line were the performers, side show people, white and black bands, assistant bosses, blacksmiths, tractor drivers, train porters, candy butchers, ushers and front door men.

Next in line were the workingmen. Last came the blacks. The blacks were given good food, at times more than their white brother workingmen. It is a fact that all the odds and ends were put on the black tables. The best food they enjoyed was the "cracklings" that was sent in from the kitchen.

My idea was reasonable. The white and black workingmen most of the time never had any loose money to buy food. Liquid food to most workingmen was far better than an in-between snack. Another good reason was that from supper until breakfast the next day could sometimes be fourteen to eighteen hours apart. Part of those hours they had worked in different areas of taking down the menagerie, big top and other small tents, loaded the wagons, taken them to the train. Meanwhile the performers and other blue collar employees would and could go down town and have a midnight snack.

Meal ticket strip supplied to canvasmen.

I was always having a brain child every day. The men in the cookhouse did not have time to yak about one change until I was starting on my next project. They never had it so soft as that year of 1956.

I would not take any payoffs from any of my employees. All three head waiters had been told at the start of the season that any money they might receive through crap games or poker was all theirs. The chef was to receive all grease money and any money received from the night cook whenever the circus was in one place more than one day. He

could deliver the money any way he choose.

The performers' head waiter had been advised that he was not to take any money from his crew of waiters or coffee boys, as had been done in recent years. He had his choice of the three lines of tables to pour coffee. I would give the three coffee boys ten to twenty-five gallons of milk each day so they could give it to their best customers. Best customers were the biggest tippers each week. The head waiters were good for at least a hundred dollars or more each week. Besides they were drawing down a good salary.

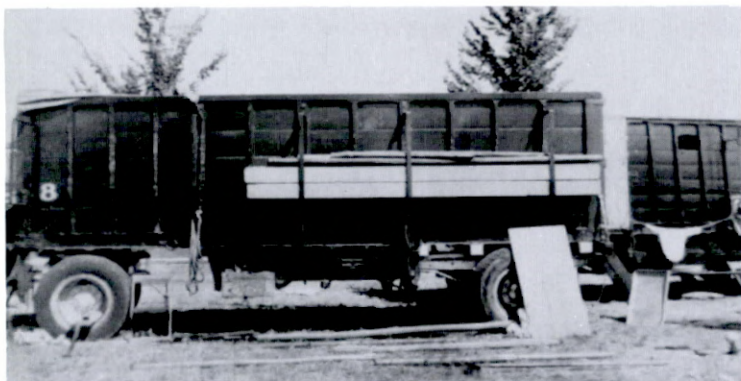
Traditionally beef stew and fish were served at Friday supper. In my regime on any circus beef stew might be served on a Monday or Saturday, never Friday. The only time fish was on the menu would be if we were exhibiting in a seaport town where I could get fresh fish steaks or fillets, otherwise no fish. Surprisingly I had very few beefs about no fish on Friday. The only time lamb was served in the cookhouse was on my annual Fourth of July dinners. On that day and only that day I would have leg of lamb with the old reliable, mint jelly.

Part of my job was the recording of the number of meals served each day. This was the daily cookhouse statement. Each workingman was given a strip of three meal tickets for each day. The number of the days on the road, as well as the day and date was printed on each strip. The tickets were collected by the front door man. After each meal the tickets were sorted by department. The performers, staff, ushers, candy butchers and visitors were counted by the head waiter. The totals by department were recorded on the statement. I kept a copy of the statements.

The union problems followed us from city to city. The union delegate from the home office drove from stand to stand. Each day he instructed the local pickets around the circus grounds.

After about two weeks under canvas I had it up to my neck trying to get food to feed the circus employees through the picket lines. Then out of a clear sky the union big shot, Killer Kane, stropped me one morning in Newark, New Jersey. He asked if I was going to town, if so he would be glad to take me. On the way we stopped at a tavern or two.





Wagon No. 8 carried canvas and tables for the dining tent. It was twenty feet long.

Laughingly, he told me how he had seen watching me sneak in food. He said he could have stopped me a dozen times. Then he told me to get all of my supplies in before ten o'clock each morning. He said the pickets were not to report to the show grounds before ten. From that day until the show closed we were best of friends.

The circus started down hill rapidly on July 1 in Geneva, New York. The night show had just started when a 70 mile wind hit the lot. It tore one side of the tent into shreds.

Later in Meadville, Pennsylvania on July 11 the show was contracted for the local fairgrounds. It had been raining there for days. The infield of the track was taken up with the big top. The tent was erected, but none of the seat wagons could be moved near the tent. The management ordered hundreds of bales of hay and straw to put around the hippodrome track. Most of the customers had to stand to see anything. At least half the acts could not work due to the soft muddy ground. The afternoon performance was late as had been the case for the prior week.

The straw that broke the camel's back happened on the run from Alliance, Ohio to Pittsburgh. The first section was a few miles from Pittsburgh when one of the flat cars jumped the track. The derailed car was left behind. The accident caused at least a three hour delay. The matinee started at 6:00 p. m.

The derailed car carried the short end wagon that had the tables and equipment needed for the performers and staff side of the dining tent. When it was time to feed the personnel we admitted all the workingmen and bosses. After they were fed the tables were cleaned and reset for the performers.

The cookhouse in Pittsburgh was some distance from the main part of the circus. We had started to serve supper when a newspaper reporter asked what we thought about the closing of the circus that night. At first I thought it was some sort of a gag. She was serious. It

was the cold fact, as we later found out.

As soon as I heard the news I made a bee line to the office wagon. Manager Lloyd Morgan was in the wagon. I asked him if it was so. He replied yes and told me not to buy any more

provisions. Hell, I told him I had already stocked up for the next four days.

Luckily there was a taxi at hand that delivered me to the rail yards. Again I was in luck, the performers cars were on a siding near at hand. I walked over to John North's private car, the Jomar. I stepped up to the platform and pushed the buzzer. North's valet answered the door. I told him who I was and that I wanted to have a few minutes with Mr. North about the cookhouse. He returned shortly and ushered me into the living room. North was in his shirt sleeves going over some papers. He said that after tonight there was no need for a cookhouse. Next season the circus was going out on trucks and would show in buildings and arenas. Employees would be paid a salary that would include the cost of meals. All circus employees would be paid off in full in Pittsburgh. Anyone who wanted to ride the show train back to Sarasota could do so, but there would not be any food issued by the circus management.

I asked North if I could feed only the workingmen on the trip south. I said I had plenty of provisions and would not have to buy anything additional. He replied definitely "not one person." With that I took leave of him.

The taxi driver was waiting to take me back to the show grounds. I advised my chef to portion out food to all our cookhouse men who were riding the train home.

The trip home was sad. The circus train jolted and lurched on the three day trip. It seemed as though the train was always going into "holes," for every passenger and freight train on the system. Other times it would stop in

some unknown lonely railroad yard miles from anywhere that would allow the men to feed and water the animals and stock. Sometimes there was no place to get water. No place for the men to grab some food or smokes.

As the circus train chugged along it seemed more like a funeral train. Word of the train must have been on the radio, as folks would be standing along the tracks waiting to watch each car pass. They waved to the showfolks on the flat cars, stock cars and sleepers.

After arriving at quarters the men went along as usual. Some helped unload the stock cars, others the wagons from the flats. The cookhouse men gathered at the permanent dining hall.

I did not open the dining room as I had been told in Pittsburgh. I did have some men make up sandwiches and coffee for the workingmen. There were no officials around to say differently.

Our crew unloaded the eight cookhouse wagons. All food and equipment was inventoried. That night I put pad locks on each door. I sent the keys to the main office.

From the opening day under canvas on May 18 to the closing in Pittsburgh on July 16 the cookhouse had served 30,556 breakfasts, 36,776 dinners and 44,386 suppers.

That was the end of an entertainment era.

With the closing of the circus so suddenly in Pittsburgh, I did not have time to put into operation still another idea I had learned around smaller circuses. These were in the planning stage. Perhaps it was for the best, as I had stepped on a few toes. Some wise guys were always waiting for me to go too far and fall off my apple cart.

Steaming dishes coming out of the automatic dish washer.



WORLD WAR II

The United States started supplying her allies, England and France, with the hardware of war and building Liberty ships to deliver this essential equipment.

With military in every town and every factory working for the war in Europe, the depression suddenly seemed to burst. Money was everywhere and Beers-Barnes found every town to be a winner. To avoid opposition with larger circuses, the show went to the hills of Kentucky and West Virginia and wherever other shows might avoid due to size or terrain.

Taking advantage of this prosperous time, a new tent, again an 80' with three 30' middle pieces, was purchased while it was still possible, as were grandstand chairs and whatever they might need. A dog act was purchased, along with a dromedary named Suzie, a trained chimpanzee, and other small animals including monkeys, some which Charley trained and worked in the show; and many, smaller caged animals for the side show/menagerie.

Irene would remain in Miami to care for the kids during the school semesters, send them to the show during summer vacation and gear for the kid invasion when they returned.

Lois was now about 14 or 15 and had begun to work Alice the elephant, did ladders as did Sadie and Charley's younger girls, Jean Anna and Diane, and joined Doris and Sadie, forming a very talented and delightful three-girl tight wire act which the girls named, The Lois Troupe. Charley and Sadie's only boy, George and his cousin Alan, (Tillie and Eddie's son) would apply clown make-up and work with the clowns.

Complying with an exclusive contract with George Hamid, I spent the summer working Shrine dates, parks and fairs. On occasion I would visit Beers-

The Beers-Barnes annex bannerline in 1941. Pfening Archives.



History of the BEERS-BARNES CIRCUS "The Barnum of the Sticks" By Harold Barnes

PART THREE

Barnes and work with the girls in the performance, adding a fourth member to the three person wire act.

Walter and I signed up for the draft as did every other male over the age of eighteen.

Tillie Mixon and Eddie separated and Eddie left the show, moving to Boston where he worked in the band at the Old Howard Theater in Scully Square, probably the oldest theater in the U.S. He remained there until he died of a heart attack much later. Whenever I would work the night club, Blinstrub's Village, in South Boston, usually twice a year, my father and I would spend many hours with "Uncle" Eddie and his new wife, Madeline, who produced the dance numbers at the Old Howard. (Although Scully Square in Boston has been completely rebuilt and modernized, a plaque hangs on one of the buildings identifying the spot where once stood the Old Howard.)

Eddie and Sadie did a strong and attractive looking double trapeze act. Pat Valdo of the Ringling organization, not being aware that they were not a team, offered them a contract to work in the little aerial number with Ed and Jenny Rooney. To fill this loss of Eddie in the air, Doris and Sadie practiced double trapeze. The act was soon added it to the performance, Doris doing the hold-ing, Sadie working underneath.

Clint Barnes booked the double trapeze act with Doris and Sadie into the Olympia Theater, Miami, Florida, that winter and Sadie had an unusual intro-

duction to Alfred Weiss, manager, whom she married several years later.

During one performance while hanging in the hands of Doris, Sadie's costume brassiere broke and fell to the floor, exposing all her God given beauty. The alert spot light man caught it falling and followed it to the stage with a pin spot. The drummer added to the effect by accompanying the falling brassiere to the floor with a drum roll and a cymbal crash when it landed at the

foot lights.

Hanging helpless in Doris' hands she was unable to cover herself until the bar was lowered onto which she clamored (a maneuver that seemed to take an unusually long time, much to the delight of the audience). The stage manager, Jim Lathan, tossed her a shirt that she wrapped around herself and she climbed down from the rigging and made a hurried exit.

Orchestra leader, Les Rhodie, remarked to her, "All this time I thought those things were stuffed with cotton. Now I know differently."

Manager Al Weiss approached her between shows and said "I understand you did a strip tease today." Before Sadie could stammer out an explanation, he continued, "If you could do that every show, I would increase your salary."

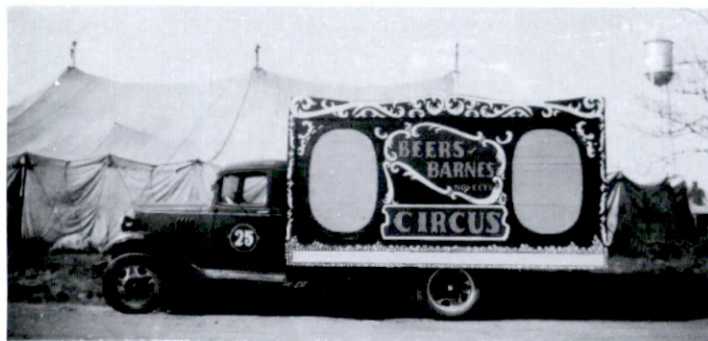
Al Weiss always liked to say when repeating this true story that the next show was filled to capacity. He was a good friend to novelty acts and a good friend to me. After Sadie and Charley Beers separated some time later, and Mrs. Weiss passed away, Sadie Beers and Al Weiss entered into a relationship. They finally were married, producing two beautiful daughters before he died.

Charley Beers never remarried.

Fanchon and Marco Theatrical Enterprises controlled bookings for many

The light plant trailer on Beers-Barnes in 1941. Pfening Archives.





Beers-Barnes grandstand chair truck in Seneca, South Carolina in 1942. Pfening Archives.

major theaters in the United States including the Roxy, New York. They booked major indoor circuses such as the St. Louis Police Circus, where at that time I was booked through George Hamid. Although the wire display included Con Colleano and Bert Sloan, Jesse Kaye of the Roxy asked me to hold open the dates of the Christmas show that year.

I opened at the Roxy Theatre Wednesday, December 3, 1941, with an exciting show. One hundred percent of the marquee of this famous Broadway show place with my name alone in lights. The Roxyettes introducing the act with a clever dance number conceived and choreographed by Gae Foster.

Four days later, Sunday, December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor was bombed and the United States was suddenly plunged into World War II. Broadway was completely blacked out, including all the lights on the marquee—something for which I'll never forgive the Japanese.

While there I signed for 23 weeks at the exclusive Versailles supper club, with Billy DeWolfe and Jane Kean. This led immediately into 30 weeks with U.S.O. Campshows, Inc., with Bing Crosby, Phil Silvers, Rags Ragland, Jimmy Van Heusen, Jackie Cooper and Ilona Massey, with occasional visits by Bob Hope.

U.S.O. Campshows arranged for my deferment from military service to sign with an overseas unit, opening in Portugal, a training area for troops before North Africa, and my father and I would have been on the ill-fated Pan American Clipper that crashed at Lisbon, Portugal, killing most of the U.S.O. personnel had patriotism not intervened.

Though I signed for this second tour, I felt ashamed, being a young man out of uniform, entertaining thousands of other young men my age who were serving their country.

Having a month between shows, I returned to Miami for a rest and found

most of my friends also in the service. And though I had a deferment from the draft, due to my contract with the U.S.O., I enlisted in the Coast Guard that was taken over by the navy during war time, and advised Jesse Kaye of the Roxy, who had begun to take over my contracting, to suspend all bookings.

An Army cavalry officer was soliciting Coast Guard men who could ride, and understood caring for horses and harness, for a newly organized beach patrol against espionage agents dropped off from German submarines.

I told the officer of Walter Davis who took his name. Then I hurriedly contacted Walter since his season had ended and the show was in Miami. Walter had to move fast as his draft notice to report to the army had been received. He joined the Coast Guard with the rating of Specialist. With his experience working with horses and "tack" and handling of men, as all boss canvasmen must do, he soon became second in charge of his unit, working only under the officer in charge.

Herald used by Beers-Barnes in 1941. Pfening Archives.

He enlisted in Miami, opened stables on the beaches and trained recruits. He then transferred to Fort Royal, Virginia, which made it convenient for Beers-Barnes to plan their summer in and around Virginia. That was the old Barnes Players route.



The Beers-Barnes cookhouse truck in 1942. Pfening Archives.

Walt took advantage of this streak of luck for him to visit the show and help whenever possible.

Unfortunately, the following year he was transferred to Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, where he trained attack dogs and then retrained them for their return to civilian life.

Roger Barnes then became boss canvasman of Beers-Barnes and the show remained the same throughout the war. Mervin Ray, Gloria and Yvonne added a great deal to the show with rings, perch,

and table rock and Mervin joined Roger and Charley in clown numbers.

With the Mervin Ray family, the Beers' and the Barnes' families, the punks in the summer, and the show owned animals, including a trained bear they were lucky enough to acquire which Charley worked, Beers-Barnes managed nicely. It enjoyed excellent business back in the "Sticks," where in many locations they were the only entertainment the area ever had.

At the end of boot training a 72-hour pass, leave of absence, was given each man. I went to Miami to see my family and to visit Ringling Bros. on a wonderful lot almost in downtown Coral Gables.

I was in civilian clothes when Pat Valdo approached with extended hand saying that he wanted me on the show the following year. I thanked Pat Valdo and said I would like to be with him but I had just

Coming Your Way

Beers-Barnes Circus
THE EVENT OF THE SEASON

Under MAMMOTH Waterproof TENTS
—A Huge Trackless Troop Of Equipment And Acute Wanderers—

Aerialists - Wire Walkers - Acrobats
And The World's Greatest Trained Animals

THE BEERS-BARNES CIRCUS Proudly Presents Two of the Outstanding Animal Acts of All Times—CHUBBIE, the Bear with the Human Brain and THELMA, the World's ONLY Trained BABY Elephant.

25 CIRCUS

THE LOIS TROUPE
Queens of the Tight Wire
Dancing, Jumping, Diving
Rope Skipping & Acrobatics
on a Slender Strand of Steel!

BOZO and RUTH
FLYING RINGS
THE BREATH-TAKING
SPIN OF DEATH

2 COMPLETE PERFORMANCES
AFTERNOON AND NIGHT 2 & 8 P. M.
WILL POSITIVELY EXHIBIT RAIN OR SHINE

AND TRAINED ANIMAL ACTS

LON ROGERS
JUGGLING EIGHT
OBJECTS AT ONE TIME
A PERFECT COMBINATION
OF ART AND OBEDIENCE

STAGE SCOOP!
WALT DAVIS and his
WYOMING
RAMBLERS
A Real Cowboy Band
Singers - Dancers
Whip Cracking
Rope Spinning
Wild West Stunts
And Beautiful
DANCING
COWGIRLS

See the Brand-Lettering
Monkey Attempt
to Set a New World's
Record as He Jumps
Across the Tent in
the Big Show

**A THIRTY
MINUTE
SHOW**
Come Early and
Give the Children a
Ride on One of our
Famous Stalled
Horses. They Will
Love It.

REAL CLOWNS
Sewery, Lammie, Zames Who
Will Keep You In Stitches!

signed a four year contract with a show much larger than Ringling.

Pat Valdo's nephew, who also was visiting, was in special services in the Army. He was then producing a series of shows at a band shell in Flamingo Park, Miami Beach. He asked if I would do my act for him. Being in the service, he would get permission from the proper officers over me.

I was transferred to the receiving station of the Captain of the Port, Miami, for temporary duty to do this performance before shipping out to sea or for other training.

I did the show and was seen by a naval commander, also in charge of entertainment at the Naval Airport, Opa Locka. He, too, received permission from my superiors and I also did the show for his base that led to a request also from the Navy to set a rigging on top of a 5-story building and on a boxing ring. God! I was "hotter" here than out in the real world.

I refused to set a haphazard rigging on a site like that but said I would do a comedy, stand-up routine. (This took a "lotta guts," remembering my last and only attempt at a single, stand-up act when I was three.)

I was not a comedian but having worked with the best, I plagiarized much of the material I remembered and being adept with a ukulele, I got by without being thrown off the roof. Knowing that this would continue, I wrote to many of my friends in show business who sent tons of material. To Don Rice, still doing club dates out of Los Angeles, and Lou Costello who sent me the script to "Who's on First" and other bits I am especially grateful.

I was correct in my reasoning. This led to another and another date as Miami had many training branches. Finally, it was requested by the Navy Department that I join a series of radio broadcasts called "Men of the Fleet," and aired from station WQAM, the CBS affiliate.

My superior officers then arranged with national headquarters, Washington, D. C. to have me assigned to permanent duty at the Captain of the Port. I remained there the entire war.

The Army had Special Services and the Navy, Welfare and Recreation but the Coast Guard did not have this important division. National Headquarters, Washington, then began a program of training, starting with certain personnel in the various bases and ships who had already displayed activity along those lines.

I was chosen from the Seventh Naval District to receive this training, at the completion of which, two men from the



Roger Barnes and George Beers around 1943. Author's collection.

group were selected to join me. Both were sportsmen who were to build a sporting program. One a hard-hitting baseball player named Ernst Logan, who was also a cartoonist. The other was one of the top basketball players of Indiana State. (I still maintain contact with these former shipmates.)

At the completion of training the Military Morale program of the Seventh Naval District was formed which turned out to be an around-the clock venture for me. I was born an entertainer, born a showman and now assigned in a safe haven to bring some laughs, entertainment and happiness to guys my age. Some who might not live to see the next month, and because of this, I was dedicated to their cause.

My Military Morale program brought in U.S.O. Shows, arranged for two circuses: one, Beers-Barnes and the other made up with acts from the Ringling show. The Wallendas, Arthur Konyot, Adrian and Charly and others. Ernestine Clarke (Baer) also helped me out by making a personal appearance at one of the "smokers" when Ringling came to town. She was the hit of the show.

There were three units of transportation. The unit in which Ernie rode and two escorting shore patrol units. One led and one followed picked her up at her hotel and with sirens wailing, skirted her through the main streets of Miami and finally to the base.

I organized a brass band, a drum and bugle corps, arranged for the boxing matches between ships (smokers), managed the recreation hall, was ship's bugler. I brought in the movies, and edited and printed the ship's weekly newspaper, *The Roger*.

I produced three musical shows and toured with one around the Seventh Naval District for two weeks. This resulted in the sale of two million dollars in War

Bonds. And with four other sailors rehearsed and organized a five-man group we called "The Jolly Rogers," which was constantly in demand.

Yes, as the clause in the old circus contracts read: "I made myself generally useful."

When the navy built and opened a new recreation auditorium in Bayfront Park, Miami, I was asked to do the opening show. I thought a minstrel would be nice as most of the men had never seen one. It had a cast of about twenty Gobs and Gals and we rehearsed relentlessly. The carpenter shop built a stair-step set similar to the Will Rogers Follies' set. The appropriate props and lighting were borrowed from the Olympia Theatre.

Three men, showing talent were selected for the end men. For the principal end man I coerced the best that I knew, "Snowball" Barnes. He first resisted because, as he said, "The kids now-a-days just wouldn't understand my comedy."

He finally agreed and we presented HIS comedy and HIS songs. He also instructed me in the mannerisms of a proper interlocutor, and gave gags and suggestions to the other end men I selected.

He stopped the show cold with every number he did. And following one number that brought on cheers and yells, all I could do--with all the pride that I had--was to gesture in his direction and say, "That's my Pop."

Roger was in the audience and when he came backstage after the show he embraced his brother. It was the first time I had ever seen tears in Uncle Pokey's eyes.

Several musical shows and motion pictures were cast and filmed on army bases and on ships to stimulate more interest in the war effort and the various branches of the service.

Not to be outdone, the Coast Guard with musical revue producers formed a revue with Coast Guard personnel to tour the United States. This show was to be called Tars and Spars and would headline movie star Victor Mature, and backed with a new comedian, Sid Caesar; dance numbers by Gower Champion (I worked with Gower and his partner Jean [Gower and Jean], with the Shubert show, Streets of Paris, before he married Marge), and other performing members of the Coast Guard. (Ace flying act leaper Fay Alexander was with the show.)

The Seventh Naval District received a directive from National Headquarters, Washington, D. C. to transfer me to rehearse and be a part of this musical revue.

The Admiral in charge of the Seventh Naval District, and my own superior of-

ficers didn't want me to go, saying they needed me for their morale program. They could not countermand orders from Washington, but "ordered" me in a friendly way to give requirements for staging the wire act that couldn't possibly be fulfilled.

I spoke with the committee from headquarters and outlined space, stage surface and other requirements which for them to execute would be next to impossible. If they ordered me to work without fulfilling those requirements, a serious accident would be imminent. I would have liked to have been with the show, but I felt as my superiors felt, that I had an obligation to the personnel of the Seventh Naval District.

Yes, I had a strong obligation to the Seventh Naval District and this obligation extended far beyond just entertainment and giving a few laughs now and then. There was a war also raging in the Pacific and that was a naval war with ships exploding and sinking daily.

I had been thoroughly instructed in abandon ship procedures; swimming through burning oil; and using one's clothing for the necessary buoyancy to keep one afloat while struggling in the sea awaiting rescue--if it came at all.

I was teaching men these procedures daily and demonstrating everything that I taught. Working with flaming seas so much it became oblivious to me that a circus could also burn down.

One day the commanding officer called me into the ship's office and said "The circus just burned down."

In anger, and thinking he was joking about Beers-Barnes, I replied that his remark wasn't funny at all and I did not appreciate his humor.

He apologized and said he wasn't joking, and that the news of a circus fire had just come over the ship's wireless. He thought that it was in Hartford, Connecticut.

Fifteen minutes later I received a telegram from Ernestine Clarke advising

The elephant semi and big top pole and canvas semi in 1947. Pfening Archives.



Bumpy Anthony on Beers-Barnes in the 1960s. Author's collection.

that Ringling had burned to the ground, but she and her mother were safe. When Ringling returned to winter quarters to frame an outdoor show for the remainder of the season, I took a leave of absence from duties to visit Sarasota.

All the original members of the Barnes and Beers families were too old to serve during World War II. Clint Barnes joined the Civilian Guard where he guarded air ports, prisoner of war camps and intelligence offices.

At the end of the war the draft was still in effect and young George Beers, Charley and Sadie's son, received notice to sign. He came to me for advice and I recommended the navy as there seemed to be more opportunities in that branch of service.

He accepted my advice, entered the navy and went into naval aviation where he remained until his retirement from military service. He became both an aviation mechanic and pilot, and flew on and off carriers.

His experience with aviation led to an opening with McDonald Douglas. Because of his knowledge of and ex-

perience with the Apache helicopter, he became a field supervisor with Martin Marietta.

The landings on the bleak shores of Normandy by American, Canadian and English forces coupled with the relentless drive of the Russian troops in the east finally brought Nazi Germany to her knees and a unconditional surrender on May 7, 1945.

And two devastating blasts from atomic bombs completely leveled Hiroshima and Nagasaki, bringing on the unconditional surrender of Japan on September 2, 1945, although fighting continued on some islands through September.

The war in Europe and in the Pacific was over.

BEERS-BARNES POST WAR YEARS

The military used a point system to choose the order that servicemen were to be discharged based on age, length of service, active duty, hardship at home, health, etc.

In March, 1946, my number came up and I was shipped to Savannah Naval Station to receive my discharge. Walter Davis, now in attack dog training, had to remain longer to retrain the dogs of war he had previously trained so the dogs could return to civilian life as lovable pets instead of killers.

I began a schedule of concentrated practice and was surprised to learn that my balance was as fine tuned as before, but the coordination was lacking and some tricks had to be dropped such as the back and forward fork somersaults in tempo and four back fork to fork somersaults in succession. I could still negotiate three, but the fourth one disoriented me.

To offset this loss I changed the format and concentrated heavily on dancing. After four years in the service thinking about the act I had decided to make a complete change in the pres-

Beers-Barnes Circus in 1947. Pfening Archives.



entation, using tricks over which I had complete control and incorporated them into three dancing routines even to the exact note of music to take off for a somersault and one on which to land.

Audiences didn't know anything about somersaults but did know music. Ending a somersault on the last note of a familiar musical number would automatically promote applause whether they liked the act or not.

Al Weiss, manager of the Olympia Theatre, Miami, who lived next door, yelled over the fence, "You look good enough to me. Why don't you work a week at the Olympia to get the kinks out?" I did, and it was the best practice and therapy of all.

About the same time a letter arrived from Sam Rauch, then booker of the Roxy Theatre in New York City. He had replaced Jesse Kaye who moved to MCA. It read, "So glad that you are out of the service. Whenever you feel that you are ready for the Roxy let me know. If you would prefer a few dates for a break-in first, I can arrange that also. We have some big shows in May and June and we would like for you to be a part of some."

Six weeks later I opened at the Roxy Theater, New York, in the "Centennial Summer" show and enjoyed a nice, long run. Back in the saddle again!

Walter Davis was discharged from the service later in the spring and returned immediately to Beers-Barnes Circus. He, likewise, had a lot of work ahead as the show couldn't be kept up the way Walter had left it due to the rationing and lack of help during the war years. Most usable, non-military item was impossible to get. Cars and civilian trucks were not being manufactured, their plants converted to war use; canvas the same. Roger and Walter purchased some half-way usable trucks and from the ones junked, they removed parts to keep the others going.

He spent every day repairing canvas and equipment and working on the horses who surprisingly remembered most of their routines. Walt was an integral part of Beers-Barnes Circus and remained as such until the last day of operation.

George Beers had been troubled with his stomach and was in and out of several hospitals. He had been ailing for some time. Finally, it was suggested that he be taken to Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore where his problem was diagnosed as cancer of the stomach.



Harold Barnes with Polack Bros. Circus in 1948. Pfening Archives.

An operation showed that the cancerous growth had traveled too far in his system and nothing could be done except to ease his pain. Anna (Grandma) Beers remained with him and the show planned its route with short jumps, remaining in the East near Baltimore. He never recovered and died in the hospital.

The show closed for one week to return to Miami for proper burial in the Beers' family plot, and then returned to finish the season.

Due to bookings, my father and I couldn't attend the funeral. We visited "Grandpa" Beers several times in the hospital during his illness, jumping down from New York for a visit and back in time for my night performances. Despite past differences, George Beers greeted Clint like a long, lost son, and the feeling, I know, was reciprocated.

After all, it should have been. The Beers family and the Barnes family had been intertwined for thirty years and most of the feelings, whether good or

Small animal cage being loaded in 1947. Pfening Archives.



bad, concerning this tent show included the Beers family. Our bull terrier Dy-namite even raised a family with the Beers' bull terrier Lady Dog.

While working at the Roxy Theater, another year, day and dating Ringling's opening in Madison Square Garden. Art Concello, then manager, visited in my dressing room and proposed that I join the Ringling organization, starting the following season. Since I had turned down Ringling offers twice before, I felt that I might consider his offer.

He said that he would give me \$150.00 per week with center ring and usual backing of the Ringling press. He also said that he would be paying me himself. Tsk, tsk, tsk. I thanked Art for his offer but reminded him that I was currently working the Roxy Theater, New York, receiving \$1800.00 per week with five more weeks to go on the present contract and was to follow almost immediately with a booking into Radio City Music Hall with a better contract.

"I would be foolish," I continued, "to leave this for \$150.00 per week on the Ringling show regardless of how great it is." So, after three "turn-downs" I never worked for Ringling. I'm now practically forced to get a visa every time I even visit Sarasota.

I became involved in a short-lived, marriage with the beautiful soloist in the Corps de Ballet at Radio City Music Hall, Elaine Myer, which everyone said was the perfect marriage.

While on a bill with my friend Andy Mayo and his "Pansy the Horse" after his niece, Virginia Mayo, had left the act to make her fame in motion pictures, I kept looking at this beautiful dancer and being aware of side glances returned from her.

Andy suggested that I take her to supper between shows to get acquainted. A year and a half later we were married. Beside working together at Music Hall, we also worked together on Harold Steinman's *Skating Vanities* after which she joined Carol Channing's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, and I went to Paris for a run at the *Bal Tabarin*.

With Elaine in New York and me on the road most of the time, the marriage was doomed to fail. We produced a daughter named Denise Elaine who remained out of show business and who later presented me with a grandson, Kyle Steers DeRiemer.

I was broken up after the divorce and left New York to join

the Beers-Barnes show and let my wire act go to pot. My agent, Sam Rauch, knowing this, booked me into the Roxy to straighten me out from feeling sorry for myself. I said I couldn't make it as I was too out of shape and wasn't practicing any more.

To snap me out of my dejection he wired back saying that we had an agreement to work together. He had booked me into the Roxy and "By God" if I don't come through and fulfill my end of this agreement he would "sue my ass in every court in New York."

I left Beers-Barnes, went home to my Dad, practiced hard and returned doing the best act, I think, I had ever done. Sam Rauch was a wonderful guy and we never had a contract. Just a hand shake. And I would go to the ends of the world just on a telephone call. And by the same token, should I book a circus date myself, I would send him his commission though he wouldn't even know of the booking. This "gentlemen's agreement" was long talked about in the theatrical circles of New York.

A few years ago at Christmas time I called him and had a wonderful chat reminiscing the old times together. Shortly after the holidays, he died.

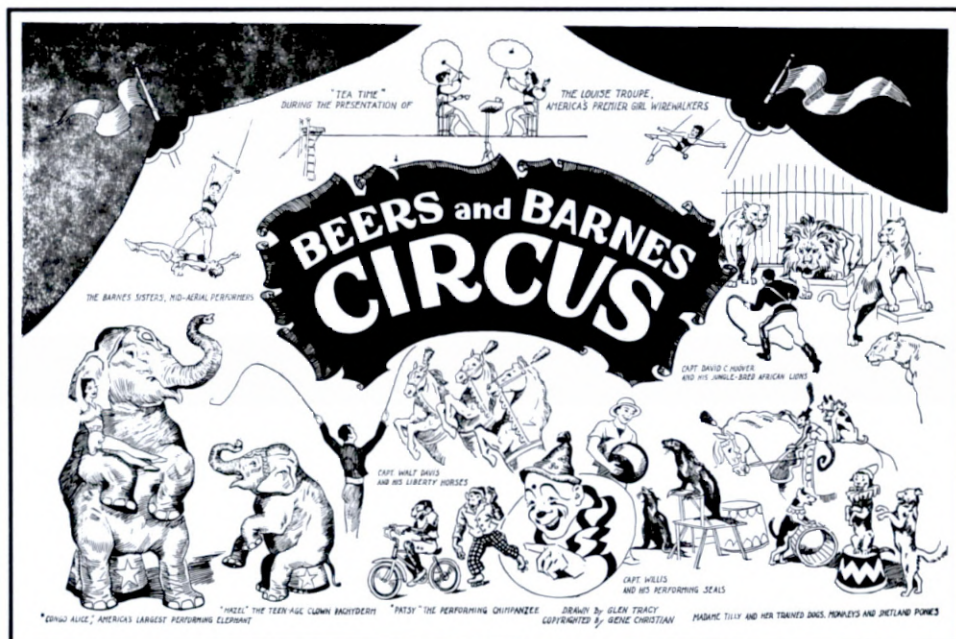
Sadie, though very important to the performance of Beers-Barnes, separated from Charley Beers. She returned to Miami, later marrying Alfred Weiss, manager of the Olympia Theater. Charley Beers never remarried.

In 1954 David Hoover joined the show with his lions. He was on the show two years before he and Lois were married.

Beers-Barnes was one of Dave's first circus jobs and he approached everything as he had back home in Ohio. One Sunday, he opened his cages and went to the movies, leaving the animal cages open and unprotected. Walter "blew his cool," put protection around the cages and stood guard until Dave returned.

Dave always had (and still has) a cigar stuck in his mouth. He lives with it, sleeps with it and even eats banana splits with one in his mouth. Lois started to notice him one matinee getting all the animals in the arena. With the guns firing, the lions' roaring, and the shouting that usually precedes a cage act, he rushed into the arena, snapping his whip and shooting his gun. He forgot the cigar that still stuck out of his face. Lois thought that was cute and soon they were married.

To be serious, Dave was rapidly becoming known in the wild animal field, and left to join Hunt Bros., taking Lois with him. They remained with Hunt for the 1956 and '57 seasons. Lois developed a single wire act to work on Hunt with Dave. We practiced together,



Glen Tracy drawing used in a small mail courier used in 1954. Pfening Archives.

developing several routines for her first year as a single.

They moved to Clyde Bros. in 1957 and Howard Suez for seasons 1958 and 1960; Carson & Barnes, 1960; Gil Gray, 1961-1964; and Hubert Castle, 1965.

Clyde Beatty wrote a letter to Dave Hoover requesting that Dave take over his act when he retired as Dave then had the only other fighting cat act in the country at that he felt was worthy of replacing him. I have seen the letter.

Dave honored this request and took over Clyde's cage on the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus where his lion act was featured for many years. He and Lois are still on the Beatty show but in different capacities.

The loss of Lois hurt the performance of Beers-Barnes considerably. The three-girl wire act was now down to one as Doris Davis planned to do a single wire act. She also planned to do swinging ladders, work the dog act, and chair balancing trapeze for the forthcoming 1956 season.

I remained in the indoor field with the exception of certain parks or fairs and had no desire of returning to outdoor circuses. Work was plentiful: five times at Radio City Music Hall; seven at Roxy; two years with Skating Vanities; 87 times on the London Palladium stage; five repeats at the Chicago Theatre; The Palace, New York; The Bal Tabarin in Paris; English variety; the Steel and Million Dollar Piers, Atlantic City; three seasons with Polack Bros. Circus; four appearances on the Ed Sullivan Show, three on Big Top and many

other theaters and night clubs with stages large enough to support my apparatus.

I felt my act slipping. I knew I wasn't doing the performance I should, due to the worry and constant trips to the Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia where my father was being treated for cancer of the throat.

The accident happened opening night with Skating Vanities at the Stadium in Chicago. I worked in spot lights and the cue was to bathe the area of the rigging with spot lights until the final somersault was completed. Then kill all lights except one tight spot for the "get-a-way" and bow.

The spot light man was apparently confused this opening night and killed all spots, blacking out the entire arena while I was upside down in a somersault. Not being able to see the wire, I missed it completely. Clint jumped forward to break my fall, and we ended in a heap beneath the wire, my foot planted squarely in his throat.

After picking ourselves off the floor when the lights came back on and after a fast check to see that nothing was broken, I signaled for house lights to remain on, returned to the wire, completed the somersault and went backstage where Dad was holding his neck which was as large as his head. After a week in the hospital he rejoined the show and steadily thereafter his thyroid became cancerous, finally spreading to his lungs.

He was quite weak in 1954 and George Hamid gave me another season at the Steel Pier so that Clint could be there but not involved. At the end of the season we journeyed to Philadelphia where he returned to the hospital and died November, 1954.

When the doctors advised me that the end was near, I called Roger. He left Miami immediately, and the Barnes brothers were together again one last time.

After another nice season with Louis Stern and Polack Bros., opening in January, 1955, and closing in December, I returned to Miami, and took some post graduate courses at the University of Miami.

Bill Morris' Benson Bros. Circus came to the area and I was pleased to note that the DeRizkie Family was on the show. Since the Barnes Comedy Co. was an eastern show we often ran into Charles Hunt's circus. I made friends with Frank and Letha (Pealer) DeRizkie, long time favorites on Hunt Bros.

DeRizkie at that time did double traps and juggling with his wife, Letha; head balancing trapeze and a head slide-for-life. Throughout time we would see all the new additions of little DeRizkies as they arrived: Francine, who did a wonderful head balancing trapeze act; then Lucy who became an accomplished semi-slack wire performer, and is married to Robert Snowden. Gayle came next who was a joy to watch with a beautiful head balancing trapeze act, followed by Frank, Jr, juggling and roly-boly. Finally Sandra, also juggling.

They were very diversified and though the acts mentioned were each performer's specialty, they were well versed in most phases of performing. And when each child became old enough to work in the act, she (or he) was carried into the ring in a suitcase.

I hadn't seen the DeRizkie family in years and while visiting a matinee performance a beautiful, young lady with the carriage of a princess walked into the ring and with the grace of a swan ascended into a head balancing trapeze rigging and performed her upside-down balancing routines without the benefit of moving a muscle. To me, truly an artiste.

After two years of courtship Gayle DeRizkie and I were married in October, 1957. We later produced a young ballerina named Cherie. At this writing we have been married 36 years.

Beers-Barnes was to open in 1956 without Dave Hoover and, especially difficult, without Lois. To fill the void a family out of Texas doing three acts was booked.

At the last minute in winter quarters, the family act-as some unprofessional acts will do-cancelled (only after Roger called), leaving Roger Barnes and Charley Beers without a show.

True, Roger and Charley clowned throughout; Charley worked a bear and

a chimpanzee; Roger worked Alice and Hazel, the elephants; announced the show and did trampoline. Walter worked liberty horses, dog, monkey and pony drill; swung the swinging ladder for wife, Doris; and worked her wire act which she was doing alone for the first time; and his wife, Ella, played the show on the Hammond organ.

It was likened to the dilemma during the first World War in Columbia, South Carolina. Formidable enough performance for a small show, but they would be running into themselves.



Gayle DeRizkie Barnes in the 1960s. Author's collection.

Roger phoned and asked if I could join immediately for one week only, just to get them started, or until a replacement act could be found.

I went to Wallace, North Carolina, where the show wintered for many years. I had only a suitcase filled with wardrobe and something to wear for clowning.

I worked the trampoline with my uncle Roger (Pokey as he was known); found some half-inch cable and strung up an inclined walk-up and walk-down to and from the peak of the tent, a la Harold Alzana, worked with Doris in her wire act, and was able to close with a somersault-on her rigging. I worked clown numbers with Roger and Charley, applying clown make-up and washing up three times during each performance; did the chair gag that preceded the elephant's entrance, and did whatever was necessary to lengthen the performance and give relief to Roger.

The show that year was given with four men: Roger, Charley, Walter Davis

and I. And, of course, Roger's daughter, Doris, and Roger's wife, Ella, on the Hammond organ.

After a week, Charles Beers and Roger Barnes cornered me and said the show originally started being The Barnes Show, and it should end with more Barneses. (I believe I was being "set up.") A deal was agreed upon and I advised my agent, Sammy Rauch, not to accept any further bookings.

My rigging box and wardrobe trunk was sent to the show, with a living trailer. I had a concession trailer built, framed a pit show, and spent the remainder of my entertaining days with Beers-Barnes Circus.

After our daughter, Cherie was born, my wife, Gayle joined the show in 1959. On different seasons she added her head balancing trapeze act, web, swinging ladder, hand juggling, foot juggling, and worked the dog act. She, too, made herself "generally useful."

Gayle's brother, Frank DeRizkie Pealer and younger sister Sandra DeRizkie Pealer, also joined for a few seasons, forming a three-person juggling act. Sandra also did swinging ladder and worked the elephant. (She fell from swinging ladder one night but didn't injure herself too severely.) Frank one season also did head balancing trapeze. He is now superintendent on Circus Vargas.

Doris dropped out from the wire act my second year on the show and I worked alone. The last year of the show found me doing an illusion act out of need when the illusionist left unexpectedly.

During our fourth year on the show, Lane Slate, producer for National Educational Television visited and remained a week, planning a shooting schedule. NET was doing a ten-part series on circuses and was interested in using Beers-Barnes as prototype for the small, family-type traveling circus.

The camera crews arrived and stayed two weeks filming. Not knowing what to call this segment I suggested MUD SHOW, bringing it up while filming my interview. MUD SHOW, the hour-long film was used as "lead-off" for the series.

One morning Grandma Beers, who of ten times would walk around the lot in the middle of the night feeding the animals or checking on them, left her trailer early to again check them out. She fell over from a stroke and succumbed on the way to the hospital. Her body was sent to the Miami funeral home. The show closed for several days to allow the family to drive home for the services. Walter and I remained on the lot to watch and to make repairs on the equipment.



The midway of the Beers-Barnes Circus in 1962. Author's collection.

That winter Alice the elephant died. Good, old, faithful Alice. She started on Sun Bros. Circus, remaining until 1918 when she was sold to the Johnny J. Jones carnival where she pushed wagons around all day and rode kids all night. She was on Barnett Bros. Circus before being sold to us. Elephant men always get together and tell stories of their wonderful charges. If I started to tell tales of what Alice did for Beers-Barnes, I could go on forever.

On a 10-acre patch of land in Hialeah owned by the show, a bull dozer dug a huge, deep hole and gently lowered this grand old lady to rest.

Aside from sentimentality, a circus needs an elephant. Not only for the attraction and an act to close the show but one to work. We had purchased Hazel, a young bull, a few years earlier. Though she did an act, she was too young to push, pull, and work on the big top.

A large elephant, Cora, was found in 1961 who was broken to pull but she was not a pusher. She was a large animal but not quite as large as Alice but she was also broken to do an act.

During the last ten years of operation the show suffered two blow-downs, both seemingly from isolated, small tornadoes. On one fairgrounds lot a couple of small, permanent concession huts separated the big top from the midway. I was out front on a ticket box as the midway had opened for the night show when the twister hit and I never felt a whisper. Crowds were beginning to gather so we raised center poles for the aerial acts, my inclined walk-up, and lights. And we did the show.

For years the show was powered by an army surplus, 10 kw light plant. It was adequate until the living trailers added air conditioning. A 25 kw generator was then purchased which had enough reserve for the trailers. For the concessions, I had an additional 5 kw generator so as not to tax the main plant.

Normally, the show traveled on eight

show-owned semitrailers; the pole wagon; seat wagon; prop wagon; side show, cage wagon that also housed the tank for Sparky the sea lion; cookhouse wagon with sleeping quarters for the cook; horse and pony wagon; generator and tool wagon; and elephant wagon. Most of the semis had fold-down bunks for the working men.

The show originally carried a concession semi which also carried other equipment. I had a modern concession trailer built with a fully equipped state room in front complete with running water, toilet, shower, and cooking facilities for my mother Irene. I also had a straight job for the pit show that carried the 5 kw generator for the concessions and the pit show.

Those remaining on Beers-Barnes this last year from the original show, Barnes Comedy Co., were Roger Barnes, his wife Ella; my mother, Irene, and Charley Beers. Second generation were Doris Davis and me.

During the last ten years the acts outside the family were (on different years) Dick Lunsford and Betty, horseman, whips and trained bull; Mauricio and Julie Droguett, with sons, Mario and Mauricio, Jr., juggling, balancing act and web; The Valencianos with Ulla, Frankie and Mama, with manager, "Circus Joe," one helluva guy and current writer for *Circus Report*.

Los Argentinas with Luis & Tina Munoz and daughter, Rita, carrying perch and loop walk; Carlos Orta and Manuela with young Carlos (Carlito), and Haraldo, cradle act, web and ladder; Dianne Wilson with son, one year with a pig act and another with sea lions; Jesus and Lucy Segrera with daughters, Rosita and Patricia, head balancing trapeze, and roly-boly.

And the last season, 1966, a Hungarian teeterboard act which remained only a portion of the season and whose name, I must apologize, escapes me. This troupe did a motorcycle circle with the extended arm supporting a trapeze on the other end, an illusion act, and a teeterboard act. When their understander left the act early in the season I substituted as understander.



The Beers-Barnes horse semi-trailer in 1962. Author's collection.

Bob Grubbs with his beautiful black and white horses; Bumpsy (George Hulme) Anthony, one of the greatest of clowns; and Happy Holmes and Mike Minella, clowns, and Dave Wharton in separate seasons.

Although many agents had the job of booking Beers-Barnes, throughout the years, Gene Christian was the man most suited for booking this small show. He knew the show and both its qualifications and its limitations and pulled no punches with committees. He didn't say it was Ringling—he booked it exactly as it was, and he left no "heat" for the show to cover up when it arrived.

He remained many years, booking and bill posting, and usually could stay at least three weeks ahead of the show. Only once around Pittsburgh did we run over him and were forced to remain on one lot for two weeks while he caught up.

And I must mention some faithful working men who contributed to the success of the show. First must be Arthur (Art) Duvall, elephant man who loved, lived, sometimes slept with and always smelled like those wonderful animals. When we sold the elephants to Hoxie Bros., Art went with them. He was killed by a flying steel stake during a storm while with Hoxie.

Napoleon (Sundown) Thomas, who claimed to be a native American Indian, was with the show twenty years and we feel that he was there only to argue with Grandma Beers.

Hubie, former half and half on carnivals, dedicated his life to the caring of the dogs and animals. He swore that he was a genuine hermaphrodite and would prove it if anyone were so curious. No one took him up. He died on the road and Gayle selected a beautiful grave site on the side of a hill in the local cemetery.

Willie Bumpas, a black cook from Wallace, North Carolina, who beside being able to whip up fantastic meals for the men, also took it upon himself to care for the dogs. And Bubba who I

know must have had a last name but nobody knew it. Year after year he would join after his bus ticket arrived, and would return home at the end of the seasons when his bus ticket was included with his last salary.

Letha Pealer, Gayle's mother remained on the show when Frank and Sandra were there. She worked in concessions with Irene Barnes, joining after her husband, Frank DeRizkie Pealer died.

Being involved in set-ups, strikes, moves, committees, concession buying, care for snakes and lizards in the snake pit show, and doing many acts in the performance, it was only natural that my wire act and rigging would be the first to suffer from neglect.

As a result, on June 6, 1966, that small, overlooked crack in my wire parted and threw the wire jack with me on it up against a quarter pole and then down to the ground where I suffered a shoulder separation, and other bruises. Although a shoulder separation isn't too serious, while in the hospital I vowed to myself there would be no more wire acts. I haven't been on a wire since.

At the end of season 1965 it was decided that the show would go on the road only one more year. We would then retire Beers-Barnes from circus business.

The 1966 season started with an eighty foot round top with three thirty foot middles. A new tent was sorely needed, but we tried to make it last. When one middle piece fell apart, it was abandoned and a center pole removed. The same when the next middle fell apart. When the show closed that final year it was down to an eighty with one middle piece. It barely held together until we reached the closing spot. There we rolled her up and called the local dump to "take her away!"

When the Hungarian teeterboard act left in early summer it was decided not

Harold Barnes' snake pit show on the Beers-Barnes midway in the early 1960s. Author's collection.



The 1962 season was typical of the Beers-Barnes show in its last years on the road.

Bill Elbrin provided this information on the 1962 show. The staff: Roger and Charlie Beers, owners and managers; Gene Christian, advance agent; Walter Davis, superintendent; Ella Barnes, organ; Art Duval, animals; Abe Abernathy, annex; Mike Minelli, purchasing agent; Harold Barnes, pit show; Irene Barnes, concessions; Frank Pealer, floss joint and Letha Pealer, tickets.

The midway had truck mounted pit show, a Wells-Cargo concession trailer, ticket office wagon, pony ride and annex fronted by banners.

The canvas included a 20 x 30 white, orange and blue marquee; a white 80 foot big top with three 30s and a 30 foot white side show top with two 20s.

The big top interior had a five high grandstand with 250 chairs eight bleachers on each end and on the short side. Seating capacity was about 1,000.

Featured in the annex were elephants Cora and Hazel; two wheeled cages containing a monkey and African porcupine and five drop cages with monkeys, snakes and a civet cat.

The performance included: 1. Harold and Roger Barnes clowning on trampoline. 2. Las Aerials, iron jaw and neck loop. 3. Charlie Beers and Sparky the sea lion. 4. Walter Davis, single pony, seesaw and hurdles. 5. Los Argentions high perch. 6. Roger Barnes with single elephant Hazel. 7. Gayle Barnes, canine review. 8. Harold Barnes, low wire. 9. Miss Tina, upside down foot loop walking. 10. Walter Davis, three liberty horses. 11. Clown gag by Roger Barnes and Mike Minelli. 12. Gayle Barnes and Miss Tina web number. 13. Roger Barnes and Mike Minelli, clown water gag. 14. Harold Barnes, inclined cable walk to the peek and back. 15. Gayle Barnes and Miss Tina, swinging ladders. 16. Walter Davis with three liberty horses. 17. Roger Barnes and Mike Minelli, chair gag with town kids and elephant Cora. 18. Roger Barnes and Miss Tina single elephant Cora. Music was provided by Ella Barnes at the organ and Mike Minelli, drums.

The show moved on these motorized units: 1. Semi with four horses and ten ponies. 2. Semi with seats, props and sleeper. 3. Two wheeled trailer with organ and sound equipment. 4. Semi with bibles, chairs and sleeper. 5. Semi with big top poles and canvas. 6. Four wheeled trailer, concession joint. 7. Semi with light plant. 8. Semi with cookhouse, side show and sleeper. 9. Semi with two elephants and annex cages. 10. Straight truck with lights, mechanical department. Pulled pit show trailer. 11. Pickup truck pulled concession trailer. 12. Semi office, seal tank and concession supplies.

to replace it. The family would continue the show until the season's close. And that's how it ended, with the exact, same cast as when I joined with the exception of Doris: Roger, Charley, Walter, and I. Ella was still playing the show on the Hammond organ.

The pole wagon was donated to the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin. Cora and Hazel were sold to Hoxie Tucker, the camel and remainder of the animals were donated to the Miami Metro Zoo, and Sparky the sea lion donated to the Seaquarium in Miami.

In Miami during the winter of 1966, Roger, Walter, Gayle's brother, Frank, and I joined Robert Ketrow (Kay Bros. Circus) in a tent rental operation. Ketrow established company in 1952. In 1976 Bob Ketrow (who gave Burt Lancaster his first circus job) retired and sold his shares in the company to me, giving me 100% ownership.

Over the years Florida Tent Rental, Inc. was built into one of the largest tent companies in the country. The largest tent was 212 feet wide by 500 feet long. Our inventory includes several tents larger than the current Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. with a total of about 400 tents in all sizes.

We have rented big tops to Miller-Johnson circus, Vargas, and Rudy Jacob's Rudy Bros., traveling throughout the summers with them. We also rented tents for individual dates for Ringling, Beatty-Cole, and scores of sponsored Shrine circuses each year.

We have been called to take our tents to Singapore, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Perth, Melbourne and Sydney, Australia, Trinidad, Johannesburg, South Africa, and were called from Moscow to design and install a tent for the Moscow Circus which we did, leasing it to them for their Canadian premier at the CNE

and then allowing them to purchased it from us. We turned down a tent to be used in the wedding of a Saudi Arabian Shiek.

Last September, we had built and installed a large tent in Caracas, Venezuela, for the Disney on Ice division of Ringling.

Of the members of Beers-Barnes Circus who retired from the road in 1966, Roger's wife, Ella Barnes, was the first to go, from a lung problem. She was 70 years old.

Roger Barnes was next, having a fatal heart attack while driving home from the office of Florida Tent Rental, September, 18, 1975, age 79.

Walter Davis, never admitting that he ever was sick, worked with a strange feeling in his chest until his wife, Doris, forced him to have an examination. He called to say he would be back the next day. He never made it as the examination showed cancer throughout his body and brain and he lasted but a few months longer. Walt was 69 when he died in July, 1983.

Irene Barnes: Clinton's wife, and my mother, not able to care for herself any longer, moved to a nursing home. She passed away in her sleep on September 9, 1987 at age 88.

Charles Beers, being the youngest of the Beers family (87), was the last to go. He died in April, 1988.

Sadie Beers Weiss, former wife of Charles Beers is the only remaining member of the Beers Players and is in excellent health, and living in Miami.

Lois Barnes Hoover, wife of Dave Hoover, is now active on the Clyde Beaty-Cole Bros Circus.

Doris Barnes Davis is living in the Orlando area near her younger sister, Barbara, her children and grandchildren.

As for myself, I am now selling Florida Tent Rental and except for returning occasionally to install unusual jobs beyond the capability of the new operators, I am looking forward to retirement.

Of the tribulations of the original family members of the Barnes Comedy Co., I feel that Lois Hoover sacrificed the most. Her first born son, Gary, was a fine, strapping boy of whom any parent would be very proud. For reasons only God could explain, he developed a malignant tumor on his brain that the skills of the finest doctors around the country could not cure.



Sandra DeRizkie and Gayle Barnes with elephant Cora. Author's collection.

When he died at 15 years of age in New Orleans on September 17, 1975. He was shipped to Miami for burial in the family plot. Lois and Dave Hoover choose to drive home for the services. Her father, Roger Barnes, died during this trip home and Lois never knew of this second great loss until she entered her mother's home.

It was a double funeral and grandfather and grandson were laid to rest side by side.

Harold Barnes in clown makeup. Author's collection.



Of the next, and sixth, generation of this long line of entertainers, Debra's daughter, Sandy, was born, September 24, 1971; Denise's son, Kyle, May 27, 1986; and Donna's son, Daniel Walter, May 2, 1989.

A NEW SEASON

Daniel, now five years of age has been chosen to be a member of the cast of a "Sesame Street" type television series (as yet unnamed) being taped at Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida.

"The show must go on." Guess it's in the blood.

EPILOGUE

The Barnes Comedy Co., The Beers Players, and Beers-Barnes Circus are now only memories. They had good times and bad; their rights and their wrongs and their winners and their losers. They never made the "killings" that other showmen talk about and they never had to sell the shirts off their backs to "make the nut." They lived and enjoyed their lives while they worked in an assortment of "top-of-the-line" theaters, opera houses or under canvas. They lived in either class hotels, boarding houses, living trailers or tents.

Beers-Barnes' longevity in the entertaining field, which actually dates back to the turn of the century, and ended only because the players desired it, can be attributed to four factors: 1, the versatility and talent of the two families; 2, the fortitude to change formats when one medium of show business was dying out, and versatile enough to carry out that change; 3, an extreme show of tolerance between the two families; and 4, last but definitely not least, its honesty and fairness to its show-going public which kept the doors of these villages open to this "Sunday school show" each and every year.

Although relations were not always perfect between the two families, the wedding of Beers & Barnes proved to be not only a lucrative business venture but an enduring partnership as well.

C. J. Barnes, Alice Blanche Barnes and their two sons, Clinton and Roger were great, versatile talents that I never noticed nor appreciated until I looked back and studied these four people while struggling with this history.

C. J., Alice Blanche and their two sons also were persons of unquestioned integrity, quality, honesty and fairness. And because of that character, I can hold my head high with pride just knowing that "I am one of the Barnes Boys."

CONGRATULATIONS TO

GREG PARKINSON

ON 10 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP

AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

OF

CIRCUS WORLD MUSEUM



from the staff

Members of the Circus Historical Society came from the four corners of the United States to attend the 1994 convention. The historic circus city of Sarasota, Florida, provided an appropriate backdrop for the activities which comprised the convention. A total of eighty-seven CHS members and guests registered for the event, which ran from Wednesday, December 8 to Saturday, December 10.

The formal convention began on December 8 with the presentation of several papers. Stuart Thayer enhanced our knowledge of the 1902 Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows by showing views of that circus accompanied by prepared dialog. The discovery and identification of a number of 19th century circus performer photographs in a local antique shop was the focus of Steve Gossard's novel approach to analyze the Gardner and Lambkin Circus of the 1880's. The session closed with John Polacsek debunking a number of stories in a memoir by a Forepaugh employee of the early 1880s.

Debbie Walk, curator Circus Galleries at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, arranged a truly enjoyable Florida style outdoor luncheon at the Museum, complete with beautiful weather. The members had an opportunity to both meet and speak personally with the Museum's director, David Ebitz, and the curator of collections, Mark Ormont. The remainder of the afternoon began with a slide show presentation by Susan Weseley on the Museum's recently cataloged wardrobe collection.

The registrants then split into small groups, some of whom toured the Museum's conservation facilities, while others toured the Circus Galleries, where special exhibits had been prepared for the members enjoyment and education.

The evening was highlighted by the ever popular CHS auction, where bar-

Bob MacDougall, Fred Pfening, Jr. and Rudy Bundy talk circus. Dale Haynes photo.

THE 1994 CHS CONVENTION

gains and rarities fetched \$3,532.00 to benefit the society's publishing efforts.

Friday's program began with the first part of an extended and tremendously documented presentation by Bob MacDougall and Howard Tibbals focusing on circus sleepers and advertising cars. The evolution of circus car designs was illustrated. The extensive presentation of over one hundred slides continued in the afternoon. A exquisite luncheon was provided for the ladies by Janice and Howard Tibbals.

An exciting display of seldom seen heralds, couriers and panoramic photographs collected by Jim Dunwoody started the afternoon session held at the Showfolks Club. Junior Ruffin then spoke about his experiences as an African American in the circus business, ranging from his wild animal act on Hoxie Bros. to his part in organizing the recently launched Universal Big Top Circus.

The Showfolks of Sarasota club provided the backdrop for the Friday night convention banquet, as it did for the auction and several other sessions. Some Showfolks club members joined the group for the banquet. The program featured John Pugh, owner of the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus. He held the audience spellbound with his articulate presentation that followed his career as a child with Cole Bros. in the late 1940s to present day circus management. A question and answer period followed.

On Saturday morning Sarasota area circus people presented two panels. The first consisted of former Ringling-Barnum personnel Tex Copeland, Arthur Grotefent, Alva Johnson and Jackie LeClaire.

Some of the scenes described by the panel were shown by Dom Yodice, who shared with the membership some won-

derful slides of the Ringling-Barnum circus in the 1940s and 1950's which he recently acquired.

The second panel of former RBBB management personnel consisted of two legends, Rudy Bundy and Bob MacDougall, who, with moderator Fred D.

Pfening, Jr., explored some of the interesting aspects of their careers with the Greatest Show on Earth. Bundy told of his years of close association with John Ringling North. MacDougall told of his years of managing the big show and designing and building the Monte Carlo show and the Gold unit that went to Japan.

The final session in the afternoon began with Dorita Estes enlightening the listeners with a well thought out paper on the business side of the circus, complete with handouts on how to finance a circus. Another Sarasota legend, Bill English, spoke about his many years and various responsibilities in outdoor show business. The final presentation was by Fred Dahlinger, who spoke on the topic of circus music.

The evening was highlighted by the Showfolks of Sarasota Circus, produced by CHS member George Hubler. Members met and spoke with over two dozen circus producers, not to mention many performers and other circus operatives in the vicinity to catch the show.

The convention was an enjoyable event for all participants. Special credit should be given to a number of individuals who gave freely of their time and energy to make it a success. Among those who made significant contributions were CHS Secretary-Treasurer Dale Haynes, Debbie Walk of the Ringling Museum and Bob Horn, president of Showfolks of Sarasota. All of the participants are also due a share of the credit for making the entire program possible. Fred Dahlinger.

Jim Dunwoody, Fred Dahlinger and John Polacsek display gems from the Dunwoody collection. Fred Pfening, Jr. photo.



Frankford, Pennsylvania, once a suburb of, and now a part of Philadelphia, was home to John O'Brien's circuses for twenty-three years. First settled in 1660, as part of a Quaker expansion, the village was established as such in 1684. Seventy years later, in 1754, it was annexed by the City of Philadelphia, as were all the "Northern Liberties," a group of small towns close by the metropolis. As is often the case, the area kept its name and local focus, relinquishing governance to the larger entity.

John V. O'Brien was born in Frankford on January 29, 1838, the son of Michael O'Brien, a stone mason. His earliest occupation was that of a fish monger, selling menhaden or porgies. He drove a wagon through the streets of the town, crying "Fresh Porgies." From this he was nicknamed "Porgey," which became "Pogey," and it is by this name, Pogey O'Brien, that he was commonly known in the circus business. He must have done this as a boy, as by the time he was thirteen he was a stage driver.

The most knowledgeable portrait of O'Brien was written by George Conklin, and appears in his book, *The Ways of the Circus* (New York, 1921). We refer anyone interested in the man to that volume. He was illiterate, penurious, and of that character, often seen in persons who rise from humble beginnings, that sees life as a contest in which one must outwit his fellow man by whatever means he can. Attributes mentioned by most commentators is that he had a good sense of humor, and that he employed a gang of Irish toughs to protect his circus property.

As a stage driver, he was employed for six years by John Haines, who oper-

John V. O'Brien, Frankford, Pennsylvania showman. Pfening Archives.



JOHN O'BRIEN'S WINTER QUARTERS FRANKFORD, PA.

By Stuart Thayer

ated the Seven Stars Hotel in Frankford, after which he worked for a company on the Washington-Alexandria run. By saving his money O'Brien, who was a teetotaler, unusual in that milieu, was able to go into the stage-line business for himself in 1857. He also became a dealer in horses. The two occupations were often linked, and included the livery business as well.

His first connection with a circus was with the Philadelphia company of Gardner & Hemmings in 1861. Dan Gardner and Richard Hemmings rented horses from O'Brien, and as was often done, he went along to keep an eye on his property. He took the job of boss hostler. Hemmings, in the 21 March 1908 *Billboard* was quoted as saying that O'Brien became a silent partner in 1862, which was his (O'Brien's) introduction in the business, but he had apparently forgotten the 1861 employment.

The *New York Clipper* of 14 September 1889 said O'Brien was assistant manager of Gardner & Hemmings in 1862. James E. Cooper bought him out five weeks into the 1863 season, whereupon he turned his attention to managing Brien's Circus. It was in the next year that O'Brien joined Adam Forepaugh, another Philadelphian, to put out Tom King's Excelsior Circus. This partnership of two horse dealers must have been a very interesting one; one thinks of it as a constant battle of wits. However, Forepaugh did not travel with the show, having Tom King as his man on the lot. O'Brien was the manager. The circus was framed in Frankford, and for the next twenty-three years O'Brien operated out of his native place.

The partners had the Dan Rice Circus in 1865, and this was the season in which Forepaugh was a hands-on manager. It was also the last year for the partnership. O'Brien seems to have stayed home in 1866.

He was back on the road in 1867 with Whitby & Co., based on Harry Whitby's family troupe and half of the menagerie

which O'Brien had with Forepaugh in 1865.

We do not propose to follow all the circumlocutions of titles and property in O'Brien's career; that would be an article in itself. Suffice it to say that at one time he was popularly supposed to control more circus property than anyone else. At the peak of his

career, 1871, he had four shows travelling. All of them were wintered in Frankford.

By 1868 his fortunes had improved to the point that he purchased the Seven Stars Hotel from his former employer, John Haines. He constructed a large brick building behind the hotel, which he used as a storage and animal barn (see map). In addition he built a ring barn on the western side of the block. In 1870 he bought a sizable home on the corner of Harrison and Darrah Streets. Just across Darrah Street from his domicile was a large barn which he used as a stable. He wintered his horses and camels on a farm he bought near Washington's Crossing in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

That he dominated the circus history of Frankford goes without saying. Unfortunately, the newspapers of the place, seven in number over the years, have not survived in quantity before 1909, leaving us with *Clipper* routes for most of our information. The earliest date we have found is one for Van Amburgh's Zoological and Equestrian Show in April 1859. The rest, through O'Brien's career, read like this:

Gardner & Hemmings, 28 April 1862
Brian's National Circus, 28 April 1863

Gardner & Hemmings, 15 October 1863 (*)

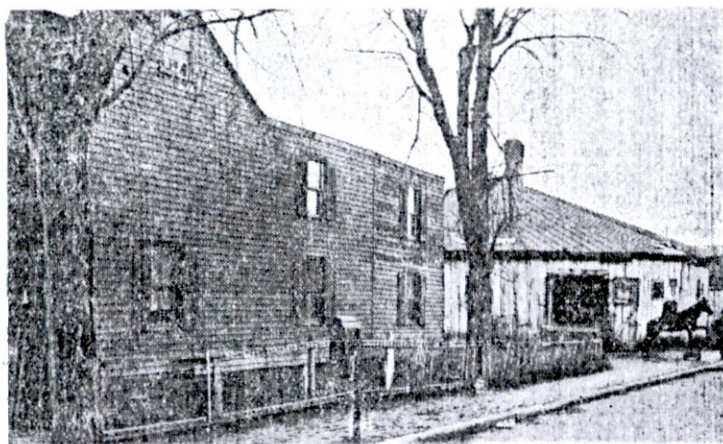
Nixon & Macarte, 9 July 1863 (*)

Tom King, 18 April 1864

Whitby & Co., 8 April 1867

Seven Stars Hotel, Frankford, Pennsylvania. Building in rear was constructed by O'Brien as a winter quarters. Author's collection.

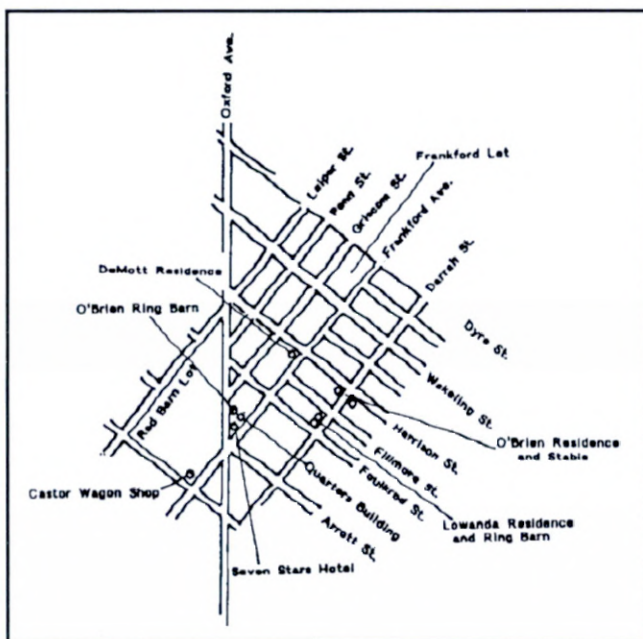




The Lowanda dwelling and ring barn in Frankford in 1914. Photo from Philadelphia *Record*. (Courtesy, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.)

Great European, 15 June 1868 (*)
 O'Brien's Menagerie, 18 April 1870
 O'Brien's Menagerie, 24 April 1871
 Sheldenburger & Co., 28 October 1871
 Kleckner & Co., 27 April 1872
 John O'Brien's Four Shows, 20 April 1872
 John O'Brien's Circus, 5 May 1873
 P. T. Barnum's World's Fair, 13 April 1874
 John O'Brien's Six Shows, 29 April 1876
 O'Brien's Circus, 16 April 1881
 Circus Royal, Opened Frankford, 1882
 Circus Royal, 14 April 1883.
 Those marked (*) have no connection with O'Brien.
 The circus lot in Frankford was just up Frankford Avenue from the winter

Map of Frankford showing various circus locations. Author's collection.



quarters, between Wakeling and Dyer Streets (see map). Another was the Red Barn Lot, which varied in size over the years, and which we have indicated at its largest extent. In the southeast corner of the Red Barn Lot, opposite the Seven Stars Hotel were, successively, the horse-car depot,

streetcar station, railroad station and, today, the Margaret-Orthodox stop on the subway. Because of its size O'Brien's 1874 P. T. Barnum's World's Fair used the Red Barn lot, the only specific use of either lot we have found.

As happened in Delavan, Wisconsin, and Peru, Indiana and other circus towns the presence of a winter quarters and its facilities led to additional circus-related activity in Frankford.

Alexander Lowanda, ancestor of all the many Lowandas in the circus, bought a house in Frankford in the early 1870's. In 1875 he built a ring barn at the rear of the dwelling (see map). A local historian has written that O'Brien was responsible for Lowanda settling in Frankford, and another that O'Brien built the ring barn. We have no evidence that denies these statements. Lowanda died in 1880, and left the property to his oldest son, Martinho.

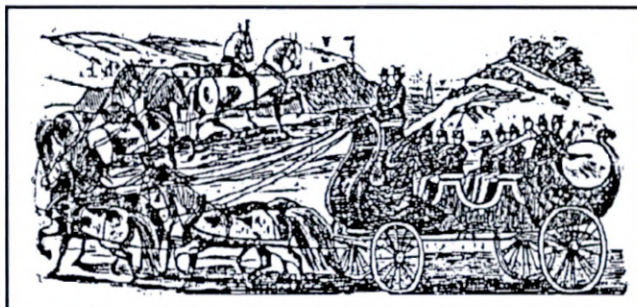
James DeMott, the well-known rider, was involved with O'Brien at several points in his career. He, too, resided in Frankford. In 1868 DeMott was a partner in a circus titled DeMott & Ward, with clown James Ward. Their menagerie was leased from Poge O'Brien. DeMott managed three of O'Brien's shows, Campbell's Menagerie in 1870; Sheldenburger's Menagerie and Circus in 1871; and Rothchilds & Co. Circus in 1876.

Another Frankford establishment with a circus connection, but which predated O'Brien's activity was Thomas Castor's Wagon Shop. This stood

at what is now Frankford Avenue and Overington Street (see map), on what was the Red Barn Lot. Castor was a member of an old Frankford family, and opened his shop at an undetermined date. The earliest reference to his work we have found was his building of the first horse-car that ran from Frankford to Philadelphia. This is dated 1858. Both O'Brien and Forepaugh mentioned in some of their ads that it was Castor who built their wagons. We know that Forepaugh's 1867 and O'Brien's 1870 bandwagons were his products. In 1871 O'Brien had a large rhinoceros cage from the same source. The Doris & Colvin circus had nineteen cages that came from Castor, but they may have been bought from either Forepaugh or O'Brien. Castor died in 1884.

Forepaugh leased the brick winter quarters building on Frankford Avenue for at least the winter of 1879-80. His quarters in Germantown had burned in April 1879, and so he split his property between Frankford and his former livery stable at Ridge Avenue and 22d Street in Philadelphia.

Nothing remains in Frankford to re-



Drawing of Forepaugh's 1867 bandwagon, built by Castor. (From ad in the Kingston, New York, *Democratic Journal*.)

mind us that O'Brien's circuses once rested there. The Red Barn Lot is now crisscrossed by the streets we show as ending at its borders. The Frankford Public Library sits on Overington Street on the old lot. The Seven Stars hotel was razed in 1925. The Frankford Hospital is now on the old Frankford Avenue lot at Dyer Street.

John O'Brien had an interest in Lowanda's Brazilian Circus in 1889, his last circus effort. Afflicted all his life with asthma, he died of it on September 7, 1889.

Bibliography

- George Conklin, *The Ways of the Circus*, (New York, 1921).
 Birkit Clarke, "John O'Brien," *New York Clipper*, 13 January 1872.
 Howard Lee Barnes, *A History of Frankford*, (n.d., privately printed) contains "Circus Days in Frankford," by Dr. Walter M. Benner, pp. 209-214.
 "Passing of Seven Stars," *Billboard*, 14 March 1925, p. 77.

Howe & Cushing's Stupendous Railroad Shows associated with Herr Vallendeck's Marvelously Trained Animal Exhibit and Menagerie began the season of 1894 with a rash of bad luck. The show, which was owned by Joe MacMahon, had wintered in Wichita and opened the season there on April 14.

The first misfortune was the illness of Little Annie Rooney. Annie was an elephant calf 18 months old and weighing a mere 2,000 pounds. MacMahon had bought her in New York for \$4,000. The *Wichita Daily Eagle* of March 18 ran a tear-jerking story of the suffering of Little Annie Rooney.

"POOR ANNIE DYING."

MACMAHON'S BABY ELEPHANT ABOUT TO GIVE UP THE GHOST.

"Poor little Annie Rooney is dying at the plow works.

"Little Annie is not the heroine of that song that has delighted American audiences so much and so long. The fact is Little Annie Rooney is no more nor less than a baby elephant owned by Joseph MacMahon the circus man who is wintering in this city.

"Friday Annie was the picture of health today [Sunday]; she is laying low with a fever and tomorrow she may be in her grave, cut down in the springtime of her youth to rise no more. Her case is a sad one. Only 18 months old and 5,000 miles away from her native land. Burning with a fever without a father or mother, sister or brother to comfort her in her distress.

"Little Annie is not large for her age. She weighs only 2,000 pounds but is growing. She would have been larger and heavier but when she was three week's old a heartless Englishman murdered her mother in cold blood in the jungles of India and through this means was thrown upon the cold charity of the world, her father having been previously abducted by a Yankee circus man. Indeed it is said of the father that he was no good anyway and made no effort to provide for his offspring. He would hang around the jungles all day and wallow in the mud and depended on the mother of Annie to do all the rustling for the family. A neighbor elephant took Annie when she became an orphan. This female used to go out in the jungles on Sunday evenings with Annie's mother and flirt with the gay young elephants of the tribe. She made a good match and when she be-

ONLY BIG SHOW COMING Meritorious Magnitude and Magnificence

VOL. IV. CHAPTER THREE. PART THREE. 1894

BY ORIN C. KING

Copyright © 1993 Orin Copple King

came aware of Little Annie's misfortune, the remembrance of her companion touched a soft spot in her heart and she took Annie to raise. All went well for about six weeks when Annie wandered out into the fields one day to play and never returned. A band of traveling Turks kidnapped her and sold her to an American dealer in elephants. At the age of eighteen weeks her passage was paid to America and she landed at New York about fifteen months ago. Joseph MacMahon happened to be there at the time and saw her. She was

This newspaper ad appeared in the *St. John Weekly News* on April 20, 1894. Kansas State Historical Society.

a comely little baby and he bought her for \$4,000. Since then he has treated her with that consideration due to her rank, for she was of a noble family on the mother's side, her great-grandfather being a nephew of one of the royal elephants owned by a native prince living a few hundred miles from Bagdad.

"Yesterday morning her attendant, a red-haired believer in saint Patrick's famous snake story, ran breathless into the Metropole Hotel and called for

Mr. MacMahon. He announced with tears in his eyes that baby Rooney was dying with the whooping cough and asked Mr. MacMahon for the lord's sake to send a nurse.

"During the night the baby elephant was taken with a raging fever. She rolled around in her little bed of straw in great pain. Some times she tried to commit suicide and butted the brick wall with her head until she had almost worn a hole through it. Patsy Riley, her attendant, tried to pacify her, but she would not listen to him and at one time she made a dive for him and would have killed him were it not for his agility in jumping over one of the forges of the plow works. Worn out at last she lay down and began to groan some of the most terrible groans ever heard in a civil-

ized land. Her moaning and groaning was plainly heard by the watchman of the stock yards who thought the end of the world had come for he never before heard such a noise.

"When Mr. MacMahon reached her yesterday morning her temperature was so high that when he laid his hand upon her the effect was like that of touching a steam boiler. The temperature of an elephant gets very high and it is hardly ever fatal until the body gets so hot that a man can't keep his hand on it.

"The menagerie physician was out of the city on a visit to St. Paul and nobody else could administer her medicine with safety. The medicines for elephants are brought from India and are quite numerous. In the case of fever a tea is given that is made from the leaves of a kind of brush that grows in the jungles called Peckiwaoe. These leaves are put in a big tub of rain water and pounded with something like a fence post into a pulp. When the juice is all out water is added till an egg will sink and then the elephant is made to drink it. It is no easy matter to make an el-

COMING ON ITS OWN SPECIAL TRAINS,

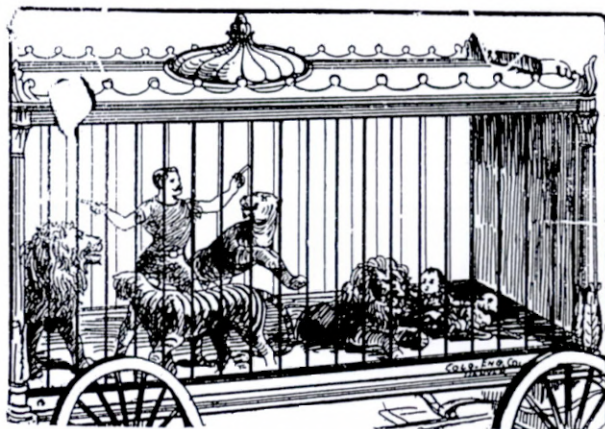
The World's Grandest Unity of Great Exhibitions.

HOWE & CUSHING'S

Stupendous Railroad Show.

Associated With Herr Vallendeck's Marvelously Trained Animal Exhibition,

WILL EXHIBIT AT



St. John, Friday May 11th.

Pre-eminently Peerless, the acknowledged leader in Tented Amusement.

elephant take medicine either for when they are sick they are stubborn creatures. The ingenuity of man however overcomes their stubbornness and by use of a little root they are made to take their medicine without such trouble. This root is called the Thoyi root and is also a product of the Indian jungles. It is ground until it looks like mustard and then put into something like a hand bellows. An attendant watches the sick animal till it opens its mouth and then he blows a charge of this powder into it. It has a terrible nasty taste and the elephant then jumps to its feet, no matter how sick it is, and runs to the water tub for a drink. The tub contains the Pee-kiwaoe tea which the elephant drinks in big gulps and this way the medicine goes into it. The menagerie physician is the only man who knows how to make this medicine, and he has been telegraphed for to come at once.

In the meantime Dr. Ward of this city visited the patient yesterday and relieved her wonderfully with some preparation he has which he gives to horses with great success."

How much beer did the press agent need when he wrote this story?

Little Annie Rooney, certainly an abused child, recovered and made the season.

A truly terrible event occurred in winter quarters on April 3. The *Daily Beacon* told the story: "There is a dead elephant out at the plow works today.

"Late this morning George, Howe & Cushing's big elephant, died. He was a monster; weighed 7,000 and was valued at \$4,000. Every spring these elephants must be broken in spirit and this animal when untied made a fight a few days since and now its former keeper is in the hospital and a new keeper took his place.

"The Howe & Cushing people think that the big beast died of a broken heart. He had never been thoroughly tamed and the beating he had to be subjected to caused him to lose his nerve and rather than give up entirely he died.

"Every spring before the elephants are taken out of winter quarters this trouble and danger is encountered. All circus people gave the same experience but it is a rare case indeed where the animal ever dies and perhaps not one in a thousand people ever saw a dead elephant.

"The owners of this big beast have not

yet decided what to do with the remains. It may be sold to some museum or it may be skinned and stuffed. It has the finest pair of tusks in America and they are of immense value.

"Yesterday the big fellow showed a disposition to get fractious and when his keeper attempted to subdue him he took a notion to go on the rampage.

"Then the circus hands were gathered together and a systematic raid was made on his lordship the elephant. He was lassoed, thrown to the ground and chained down. His mad struggles were something fearful, but the chains held. In the fight the huge elephant hook had been jammed into his tough hide again and again, only to tear loose leaving a gaping wound each time.

Joe MacMahon, owner of Howe & Cushing's. Pfening Archives.



"The colossal brute's small eyes twinkled dangerously but he was held fast securely. The keepers with red hot irons made holes in his hide, and he would not give in. He was whacked over the head with stake pins and smashed over the body with irons, but at last accounts he remained unconquered.

"This elephant was secured cheap because of his vicious, dangerous temper, and has to be conquered at least once a year. When he finally does give up he will trumpet for mercy, and for some time. Thereafter will be as meek as Moses."

Mercy! Could the keepers spell the word?

It is not easy to dispose of a dead elephant. "Charles Payne, who deals in wild animals and is a practical taxidermist for mammals," according to the *Topeka State Journal*, "has disemboweled the dead elephant and put 1,200 pounds of ice in the carcass to keep it in good condition until it is disposed of.

"Mr. Payne has a telegram from an eastern firm asking him to purchase it for them. He expects to skin it and get the skeleton entire. The heart weighed about eight pounds and the heart cavity was filled with about three gallons of blood, that obstructing the valves.

"It will require three days to cut up the dead animal and this with three assistants."

A feud between Joe MacMahon and his sister, Mary A. MacMahon, con-

cerning the family estate provided Wichita some exciting news. At the center of the dispute was 12 horses sold to Joe by his sister, who retained a mortgage on the animals. Joe failed to make payment as required and the sheriff was ordered to take custody of the horses.

On April 5 the *Daily Beacon* reported an attempt to get the horses from Joe.

It read like a dime novel.

"'Dam you dam your badge and dam your authority!' shouted a fierce looking canvass (sic) man at the plow works this morning as he rushed at Under-sheriff Charley Simmons and Jim Howard, the liveryman.

"'Stand back!' exclaimed the under-sheriff as he pulled a big six shooter and stood the crowd. Howard followed his example and together the two men faced the angry mob.

"'I have an order from court to take some horses,' said the officer, 'and I propose to execute it, so don't crowd or I'll shoot.'

"The gang of showmen followed at the heels of Simmons and Howard, threatening them every minute and the men were unable to view the stock they wanted to and were forced to either kill some one of the mob or get out so they left for the time being only to return later in the day.

"The trouble came up over nine head of circus horses. The affair is a mixed up arrangement and is a family matter. Mary A. MacMahon is said to own ten horses or to have sold them to her brother and took a mortgage on them. Joe MacMahon claims an offset of some \$1,400 as a feed bill. The matter has been in court for some time and Jim Howard was appointed receiver. The horses remained in the circus people's hands on their agreeing not to move them.

"This morning the under sheriff went out with Howard on an order from court to take the horses. When they reached the plow works they found all the doors locked and crawled into a window. No sooner had they dropped down on the ground than a big showman rushed up and exclaimed: 'Knock 'em on the head with a club and chuck their carcasses out of the window.'

"Then it was that the sheriff drew his pistol and Howard followed suit. When they came to leave the gang endeavored to make them go out of the window, but they refused to do so and left by the door.

"Simmons and Howard returned to the scene of action again about noon and found Mr. Smith, the manager, present. He deplored the trouble of a few hours before, but said he could not censure the canvass men. The officer looked at the stock they had an order for, but as Smith said it would be fixed

up this afternoon the horses still remain with the show people. There may yet be trouble over this matter."

Another attempt was reported on April 14.

The dime novel continues, "I'll get my man this time or I'll kill him," said undersheriff Charley Simmons at the sheriff's office this afternoon as he adjusted cartridges in his big 45-calibre revolver, his face quivering with rage and disgust.

"It was another row with the MacMahon circus people. A few days ago the BEACON contained an account of the trouble this officer and Jim Howard had when they went out to the Plow works to attach some horses claimed by a sister of Mr. MacMahon, and over whose possession there has been a law suit. At that time it was fixed up by the circus people promising to settle before circus day. This they have failed to do and trouble has been feared all along.

"After the parade this morning [first day of the season] Sheriff Simmons and Jim Howard went out to the grounds to collect the sum of \$1,400, as decreed by the court or take the horses. They met Mr. MacMahon who told them to go and get their stock, and turning, left them.

"The two men went over to the horse stable and as they approached the horses they were set upon by a crowd of roughs when Simmons drew his revolver it was promptly knocked out of his hand and they were driven back without getting the horses.

"Then the under sheriff returned to the court house and Sheriff Royse at once organized a posse to go over there, get the men who had resisted the decree of court, take the horses, and kill somebody in the melee if necessary.

"At 3 o'clock the sheriff and a posse of six armed men were at the grounds with a warrant from court for the man who tried to get the under sheriff's gun and also to take the horses.

"MacMahon had gone down to the court house to see what could be done in the matter, and said he would probably have to give them up.

"In the meantime the sheriff and posse awaited on the grounds for the afternoon show to end and then they proposed surely to take the stock. Trouble may result at the last minute but it don't look like it at the present time."

The source of the dispute, as explained by the *Beacon*, was "the settlement of an estate in which Charley MacMahon, the owner of the Howe & Cushing circus, and his sister were heirs. The sister claimed in court that Charley, assisted by his brother Joe, was trying to beat her out of her rights. The brothers, on the other hand, asserted that the sister had already beaten Charley out of thousands and that

all he had to make a living with was these nine horses in dispute. Joe MacMahon was allowed a \$500 feed bill by the court, and Jim Howard was appointed receiver for \$1,400 said to be due the sister."

The dime novel continues, "As detailed in Saturday's issue, Bill Knapp, a noted bruiser, who has felt the weight of Harry Sutton's 6 shooter in days gone by undertook to take Simon's gun away from him. Knapp was acting as hostler at the time. The under sheriff came down to the court house and reported a sheriff's warrant was issued for the stock and also for this man Knapp. It was decided to take a sufficient posse along to enforce the decree of the court and a half dozen deputies with 6-shooters were on the grounds by 2 o'clock.

"A truce was declared until the show for the afternoon was over and in the meantime the officers walked about the tents and grounds in twos and threes.

"Dar's gwine to be a killin' suah," said a little darkey who followed every step sheriff Royse made, and he expressed the sentiments of the crowd. About 3:30 the suppressed excitement found vent when a pistol shot suddenly rang out near the horse tent and a rush was made in that direction by the mob.

"Under sheriff Simmons had met Knapp and demanded his surrender. The fellow told him to go to a warmer region and made a grab for the officer's gun. Simmons smashed Knapp over the head, knocking him down and cutting a big hole in his scalp. The weapon exploded and seeing the blood everyone even the sheriff's themselves thought Knapp had been shot.

"The desperado raged, fought and cursed. Handcuffs were placed on his wrists, and the hostlers, canvasmen and fakirs began to gather about in a threatening manner. Two or three deputies, with drawn revolvers, warned the rabble back and Harry Sutton got in good work with a buggy whip. When the crowd pressed too closely he would tickle the nose of some venturesome individual with it. There would be a wail of agony and a backward rush. Knapp was placed in a hack and taken to jail. When the gore was washed from his head it was discovered he was not shot but had been cut with the hammer of the gun. He raved and swore for hours, but he was trapped.

"The now thoroughly aroused sheriffs went into the horse tent and proceeded to take out the nine horses. The circus hostlers and canvasmen stood about in

threatening groups awaiting a look from the boss to go in and resist but they did not get it and the horses were led away without any further trouble.

"These officers are a big gang of stiff," said a showman, "and are carrying about an arsenal. If some one gave the word the boys would take the guns away from them, ram them down their throats and break 'em off, but it is needless to say that no one saw fit to give that word."

The affair was settled on May 1 when the horses were auctioned. Joe MacMahon bought four and his sister Mary also bought four. Four were given to Joe MacMahon the day before recognizing his prior ownership. The sale brought \$1,592. One horse sold for \$350.

The first newspaper advertisement for the season of 1894 appeared March 31 in the *Wichita Daily Beacon*: "The World's Grandest Unity of Great Exhibitions.

"HOWE & CUSHING'S STUPENDOUS RAILROAD SHOWS! "Associated Marvelously With Herr Vallendeck's Trained ANIMAL EXHIBITION AND MENAGERIE! will exhibit at WICHITA SATURDAY, APRIL 14.



"Preeminently Peerless the Acknowledged Leader in Tent-ed Amusements. Two complete circus troupes. A Five Continent Arenic Assembly. All nation's greatest male and female celebrities. Colossal Menagerie of Rare Wild Beasts and Ocean's Deep Surprises. Asia Europe Africa and America in Contribution.

"GRAND PARISIAN HIPPODROME.

"Entirely new and original feats--The most magnificent hippodrome--The Best circus feats--The grandest exhibitions features--The most wonderful and amazing animal performances--The greatest wonders--The most complete wild beast shows--The everywhere conceded best shows on earth. Monster Museum of Marvelous Curious Creation. Animate and Inanimate Wonders.

"The most traveled the most famous and unique exhibitions ever conceived. A wonderland sumptuous carnival. A rare rich and instructive entertainments unparalleled presenting innumerable special features never before exhibited in America to see either of which would be worth a dozen admission fees.

"GRAND FREE BALLOON ASCENSION AND PARACHUTE JUMP DAILY.

"Make up your parties and consult your station agent for excursion rates on HOWE & CUSHING'S DAY.

"See the free spectacular street pageant.

"One ticket for the usual price admits to the COMBINED SHOWS.

"Two grand exhibitions and performances daily rain or shine. Doors open at 1 and 7 p. m."

The crowd at the matinee in Wichita's Riverside park was described by the *Beacon* as, "only a fair attendance." There were no reports on the evening show.

"The streets were crowded when the parade finally came along about noon."

The *Beacon* reported that "taken as a whole it was very good. This being their first stand the people and their horses were naturally a little green yet. The performers made a very presentable and creditable appearance. The animal wagons were newly painted and sufficiently numerous to make a respectable showing. The uniforms were neat and tasty and the two bands, aided by a troupe of Scotch bagpipe players, furnished excellent music."

Following the Wichita exhibitions Howe & Cushing entered Oklahoma Territory, the first date being Kingfisher on April 16. The last Oklahoma date was North Pond Creek on May 9.

John J. Holland, advance agent, called on the North Pond Creek *Echo* on April 12 and planted a few handouts. Holland informed the citizens that Howe & Cushing required 500 biscuits for one meal and in each town. The show purchased 3,000 pounds of hay, 300 of meat, 150 bushels of oats and other supplies.

Beginning April 13 the *Echo* ran a handout every week. First was, "The Greatest of Shows."

"The renowned Howe & Cushing's are coming with their great exhibitions and is said to be of surpassing interest. No other show of the past or present has ever been so favorably mentioned in the eastern papers. A contemporary says that from entrance to exit it is the most interesting exhibitions ever presented American audiences, its many wonders never seen with any other shows and the universal excellence of the performance account for the great success that has attended the brilliant managers in their careers of many years before the public of the world. The big show will be here on Wednesday May 9th when everybody will have an opportunity of seeing the universally acknowledged best show on earth."

On April 20 the *Echo* printed: "The Coming Circus."

"Howe & Cushing are recognized at the top round in the ladder of famous showmen. Their exhibitions are said to be unique in many new and pleasing departures from the old style circus and menagerie. The introduction of various

phenomena hitherto unknown to showgoers in America. Circus and hippodrome performances that it is said have never been equalled. Its wild animal show consists of rare beasts many of recent discovery and taken as a whole it is undoubtedly the best tented exhibition ever organized; the newspapers are unanimous in its praise. We look forward to crowded pavilions on the day of its advent at this place on May 9th."

The *Echo* April 27 reported: "Howe & Cushing's Greatest Effort."

"It is scarcely necessary to remind our readers that the world's best show is coming or when it will be here as it is thoroughly advertised on the bulletin boards and dead walls. Its small bills are scattered like snow flakes every where and attractive lithographs telling of the advent can be seen on every hand. That there is a rare treat on hand for amusement lovers there is no doubt and everybody and their neighbors for miles and miles around will be here at North Pond Creek May 9th for a day of sightseeing and enjoyment. It is only fair to state that Howe & Cushing are

This newspaper ad appeared in the May 17, 1894 *Troy Weekly Chief*. Kansas State Historical Society.

Caution! Don't be Deceived!

No Big Show at Troy Until
Wednesday, June 6th

COMING ON ITS OWN SPECIAL TRAINS

THE WORLD'S GRANDEST UNITY OF GREAT EXHIBITIONS

HOWE & CUSHING'S

Stupendous Railroad Shows

Associated with Herr Vallenberk's Marvellously Trained Animal Exhibition

WILL NOT EXHIBIT AT TROY



Until Wednesday, June 6th

Pre-eminently Peerless, the Acknowledged Leader in Tented Amusements
Two Complete Circus Troupes, A High Continental Acrobatic Assembly,
ALL NATIONS GREATEST MALE AND FEMALE CELEBRITIES

said to have the most interesting show ever presented."

The last handout appeared in the *Echo* May 4: "Howe & Cushing's."

"Great train of wonders are on their way and will spread their tents at NORTH POND CREEK May 9th. We are to have the best show ever seen on the occasion. Criticisms most flattering reach us through exchanges and all agree in pronouncing Messrs. Howe & Cushing the leaders and most popular of exhibitors possessing many amazing surprises entirely original and of such wonderful attractions as to warrant the attendance of many that rarely attend circuses."

The above four handouts comprised the bulk of the show's publicity in every town played. Newspaper advertising was the same as used in Wichita varying only in formation. The *Echo* ran four insertions of a two-column ad.

After the exhibitions at North Pond Creek the only report was that "H. S. Edwards came minus \$9.00 in a money deal with a 'money changer' at the circus Wednesday."

Howe & Cushing returned to Kansas at Wellington for exhibitions on May 10.

None of the Dodge City papers had any comment following the performances of May 12, but ahead of circus day the *Globe-Republican* in addition to a handout published the following statements in its news columns: "The greatest and grandest of all great shows, Howe & Cushing's, will exhibit at Dodge City on May 12."

"The most remarkable and interesting wild animal performances ever witnessed will be seen with Howe & Cushing's shows at Dodge City May 12."

"Everybody and their friends will be on hand to see the big shows at Dodge City on Saturday May 12."

"Blanche Reed, Europe's greatest horsewoman, will also ride at each performance of Howe & Cushing's show at Dodge City May 12."

"The smallest elephant ever exhibited and largest dog in the world about equal size are companions with Howe & Cushing's shows which will be here May 12."

"The Stillwell Bros., renowned Aerialists in mid-air aerobatic sensations and invocations (sic) in circus feats are with Howe & Cushing's shows which will be here on May 12."

"There is a good menagerie with Howe & Cushing's Circus."

The *Goodland News*, speaking of the exhibitions of May 28, reported that, "The great aggregation that visited Goodland Monday did not amount to much as far as the display goes but the performance, although short, was really good. The employees of the outfit were as ragged as a rag baby and looked

hard. The greater portion of the show was here two years ago. The afternoon performance drew but a small crowd, a large number of which were compliments. The rain storm stopped the evening entertainment."

The show arrived in Goodland on Sunday, and in another column the *News* commented on a ball game.

"There was an attempt to have a ball game Sunday and one inning was played between the town club and the circus boys, when it was stopped by Mayor Scott, who was down town selling hay to the circus. Mr. Scott is very careful that the city law is not violated although at the same time he was violating a state law."

The exhibition at Norton on May 29, in the opinion of the *Courier*, was "a real good circus, better in fact than many for its one ring. They have good horses good riders and good performers all around. The attendants are gentlemanly and accommodating. Upon the whole faultless as a circus but cursed by a horde of swindlers of various kinds. Many simple minded, both young and old, suffered from five to a hundred dollars by their machinations. The strong arm of the law should be thrown around these poor brainless suckers for their protection."

Smith Center saw the show on May 30 with "a splendid rain" in the evening, according to the *Smith County Journal*. At the matinee a lady rider was thrown from her horse. The horse fell on the rider and the *Journal* thought "she was seriously if not fatally injured but the manager announced that such was not the case."

The day following the exhibitions the *Journal* made a stern report: "Howe & Cushing's circus has come and gone. The menagerie was minute, their circus was composed of a few third rate performers and taken as a whole it was a slim affair."

"The whole concern is a well organized band of thieves. They plied their vocation in this city with considerable industry. If they failed to get gold of a man's or child's money by the ordinary gambling schemes of common street fakirs they would snatch it from their hands and run under the big tent like a rat into a stone wall."

"The crop of suckers which have grown in Smith county since Cook & Whitby were here two years ago was surprisingly large and ripe for the harvest. The robbers gathered them in, as greedily as they bit."

There was no excuse for anyone to be

taken by the gamblers when Howe & Cushing played Scandia on May 31 for the *Scandia Journal* had printed a warning for the citizens nearly three weeks before the exhibitions:

"Don'ts For Circus Days.

"Don't be a jay.

"Don't be a clam.

"Don't buck the shell game.

"Don't throw dice.

"Don't get a bill changed in the show.

"Don't roar if you are an example of a fool and his money soon parted.

"Don't have anything to do with the games in the side shows or on the grounds.

"Don't as you value your hard earned dollars.

"Don't disregard this advice.

"Don't think that a horny-handed farmer can beat a circus gambler at his own game."

After the exhibitions the *Journal* published a scathing report: "A Gang of Thieves.

"If the present city administration had not committed a mistake before, it scored number one when it became a party, in any way, to allowing, or facilitating the exhibition of

Howe & Cushings. Of course the show was outside of the city limits and the city could not in any way prevent the exhibition, but it was a mistake to allow such a gang to parade the streets. If ever a gang of cutthroats and thieves struck Scandia it was the Howe & Cushing gang. They had a

moderate patronage but legitimate business was not what they were here for. The people tumbled to the racket early in the day, and but few were caught with the various seductive games. This seemed to anger the thieving gang, and they began to make threats. A poor traveler was in town exhibiting a remarkably well trained monkey. The show wanted the monkey and enticed the man and monkey into the side show where the monkey was taken from him and a man carried it to the circus cars. A crowd quickly gathered and led by sheriff Ward compelled them to deliver the monkey. They were in an ugly mood and in the evening when we went on the ground we plainly saw that they 'had it in' for us--we always try to be in a position to enjoy any excitement, and being a deputy constable, we were right at Dick Ward's heels in the monkey scrape. After remaining a short time we came away. In a few minutes Sel. and James Taylor and Henry Turner appeared on the grounds and immediately

the circus men attacked them. Sel. Taylor and Henry Turner were the men they wanted, but they mistook James for one of them and fired a number of shots at him while he was unhooking himself from the pasture fence into which he had run. The other boys returned the fire, but as they were shooting directly toward the tent they were afraid they would hit some of the spectators. The boys left the circus grounds rather easily. Some of the citizens favored cleaning out the gang, but fighting a hundred armed men in the dark is not a job to be hunted for, and as it was impossible to arrest them without a fight, and from further fact that it would have been impossible to have found out who did the shooting, the people concluded to battle their wrath and take it out on the next circus that came here. They were a tough gang, and if they should ever show up here again they will find things very unpleasant."

A gambler with the show, John P. Jones, used a ploy frequently employed to avoid being tried in court as a gambler. Jones threatened to charge his victims with being a party to gambling if the charge against him was not dropped. The *Sabetha Republican-Herald* reported that Jones pled guilty to resisting an officer and escaping from the custody of a constable. The gambling charge was dropped to avoid the embarrassment of local suckers.

The *Herald* reported that circus day on June 4, "drew quite a crowd to Sabetha and the merchants reported business quite brisk Monday afternoon."

The *Herald* realized a connection between the circus management and the gamblers that was frequently overlooked in the press.

"We hear some of our citizens express the opinion that Howe & Cushing should not be held responsible for the gang of gamblers that were with them show day. This would be well enough if the robbery had occurred outside the tents, but as the gambling schemes were all worked inside it is prime facie evidence that it was sanctioned by the management, who probably allowed it for the benefit of the 'rake off' they got. They are a bad outfit and cannot be censured too severely."

The *Horton Headlight*, speaking of the exhibitions of June 5, noted that, "Tuesday was pay day among the circus boys and they were not slow in blowing in their money."

It was a good circus, according to the *Headlight*, that gave two performances in Horton "to appreciative audiences, it was by far the best show that has exhibited in Horton this season. Each act was a feat by itself. Every member of the entire aggregation is well adapted to his or her part. The bareback riding



by Miss Reed and MacMahon, deserves special mention they were very good, in fact MacMahon's riding was the best we have seen. The tumbling, slack wire walking, high table feat and the throwing of knives around the lady are acts worthy of mention. The brass band with this show is simply grand, they are all musicians. The writer is acquainted with most of the boys, having been reared in the same county. When they were young these fellows were off in some old barn tooting away, putting in their time learning music. Mr. George Barnum, the press agent and ticket manager, is a gentleman and understands exactly how to treat the craft and his guests pleasantly, he is generous, kind and could not do enough for your pleasure and comfort. Howe & Cushing have a good circus."

George Barnum paid the advertising bill, an act which was always a pleasure and a comfort to the editor.

The Clay Center *Times* reported that "Howe & Cushing played to two of the poorest audiences a circus ever had in Clay Center. But the audiences were no poorer than were the performances."

The Clay Center *Dispatch* commenting on the events of August 18, related that "Howe & Cushing's circus showed here Saturday, leaving in their wake the usual number of suckers who ran up against their fakirs. The show is a small concern yet has many good features. The menagerie don't amount to much, but the circus performance is better than the average."

"The outfit was supplied with a full corps of gamblers and fakirs. Many of them playing their games openly in the main tent, and they caught lots of suckers too. One man who but a few months ago wanted to be sheriff of this county, let his gambling propensities get away with him to the extent of nearly \$50. Another man dropped \$50 and others lost smaller amounts."

"It looked as though the show depended more on its gamblers and fake games than on legitimate patronage."

"There was hardly any more than the average Saturday crowd in town and neither performance was largely attended."

The Manhattan *Mercury* stated that, "In all our circus experience we do not remember having as small a crowd as was in attendance last Monday [August 20]. The show itself was meritorious but many of the attaches were professional bums and gamblers, who plied their trade vigorously. One of the latter class, E. W. Hayes, was arrested for

stealing a pair of shoes from the Spot Cash store and tried Monday in Judge Harper's court. He was found guilty and fined \$25 and costs. On motion of the county attorney remitted \$10 of the costs on condition that Hayes should pay the balance and leave the town which he did."

The *Nationalist* agreed with the *Mercury* concerning the size of the audience.

A citizen of Burlingame received a visit from his son on circus day August 22. "It was the first Mr. Howe had seen of him in 16 years. His son is the slack wire walker and juggler in Howe & Cushing's circus, and is a very good one at it too. He is one of the proprietors of the circus being the senior member of the firm, though yet a young man of only 26 years."

There is no supportive evidence, and it is doubtful that the son owned any part of the circus.

The events of August 23 at Valley Falls earned the following report in the *New Era*: "The 'greatest and most stupendous show on earth' came here Thursday morning over the Santa Fe from Burlingame, and pitched their tents in Mitchell's pasture east of the railroad tracks. A fair sized crowd witnessed the performances in the afternoon and evening. A trapeze actor named Ward fell in the afternoon from a horizontal bar and nearly dislocated his neck. The doctors say his skull is cracked, and it will be some time before he will be able to go on the trapeze again. The performance for a small show was very good and a number of good acts were given. The side show was a veritable thieves' den and the way the suckers bit at the various games was a caution. The show management should run the fakirs off the grounds, and then they have a pretty decent show. Thieves and pickpockets were as thick around the grounds as flies around a sugar barrel, and pockets were picked in broad daylight. The managers of the show seemed to be gentlemanly fellows, but the gang that follows

Giraffe in an 1894 Ringling Bros. parade. Pfening Archives.



them is a tough one. They went from here to Argentine."

The *New Era* related the animosity authorities received when an effort was made to control the showmen.

"Constable Conser arrested a showman Thursday evening, and a large size riot was narrowly averted. The showmen grabbed stake pins, knives and revolvers, and swarmed around the constable. Several blows were exchanged, and during the struggle Maj. lost his hat and his prisoner."

The Osage Mission *Journal* ran an ad August 16, announcing exhibitions there by Howe & Cushing on September 3.

On August 23, the *Journal* reported that, "We have received a letter from the Howe & Cushing circus manager saying that their show for September 3rd is declared off on account of Forepaugh dropping in ahead of them."

When the Forepaugh show revised its route, Eureka was replaced by Osage Mission for August 27. Howe & Cushing did not wish to compete that closely with Forepaugh and scheduled Oswego for September 3.

The Oswego date was typical of Howe & Cushing. The Oswego *Labette County Democrat* reported: "The circus has come and gone. Those who attended seemed satisfied with their investment, except some who endeavored to play at a little game which was gotten up on the side for their especial benefit. This game which is known in the vernacular of the street as the 'shell game' was played with such skill and earnestness on the part of the entertainers that some of the visitors are said to have been moved to tears. Those who lost their money should not make any fuss about it they were just as deep in the matter as the traveling gambler and would have taken his money if they could have won. However, it is a shame that a circus cannot get on the road these days without carrying with it a gang of cutthroats, whisky bloats and thieves, and if the management so determined they would not be along."

Following Oswego the show disappeared from the Kansas press.

The Topeka *State Journal* on January 5, 1895, ran the following: "Birmingham Ala. January 5--The animals of Howe & Cushing circus which are being quartered at Avondale are suffering from the cold weather."

"Since Saturday several monkeys and two camel s have died, and a lion and lioness valued at \$4,000 are

sick and will die. The loss to Howe & Cushing's circus will amount to \$10,000."

These are the known Kansas dates for Howe & Cushing's Stupendous Railroad Shows Associated with Herr Val-lendeck's Marvelously Trained Animal Exhibition for the season of 1894: April 14, Wichita Opener; May 10, Wellington; May 12, Dodge City; May 28, Goodland; May 29, Norton; May 30, Smith Centre; May 31, Scandia; June 4, Sabetha; June 5, Horton; June 6, Troy; June 7, Fairview; June 8, Maryville; August 17, Clyde; August 20, Manhattan; August 21, Strong City; August 22, Burlingame; August 23, Valley Falls; August 24, Argentine; September 3, Osage Mission (Cancelled); September 3, Osage.

Unlike most other big shows Ringling Brothers' World's Greatest Shows in 1894 was still advertising the names of individual performers. Named in newspaper ads was "Lundin Strongest Man That Lives; French Family Gilet, Europe's Greatest Quintette of Acrobats; Bros. Herman Emperors of the Air; Josie Ashton European Equestrienne; Mike Rooney Champion Sommersault Rider; Akinoto's Troupe of Imperial Japanese Equalibrists.

"America's largest Grandest Best Exhibition" consisted of ROYAL. ROMAN HIPPODROME 3-Ring Circus, Elevated Stages Millionaire Menagerie, Colossal Horse Fair, Oceanic Aquarium Museum of Marvels, and Trained Animal Exhibition. Gorgeous Pageant of Rome's Conquering Legions."

The advertisement in the Leavenworth *Times* contained a cut of a giraffe in a parade wagon.

Among the wonders in the "Most Complete Zoological Display on Earth!" was:

"ONLY GIANT GIRAFFE, MONSTER HIPPOPOTAMUS

"Prince Chaldean Long Maned Stallion. Racing Glories of Old Rome together with the Exciting Contests of the Modern Turf. Two and Four Horse Chariot Races. Standing Hurdle Obstacle and other Races.

"GRANDEST FREE PAGEANT ever seen on the Streets of any City leaves the show grounds at 10 o'clock on the morning of the exhibition. Ten kinds of music. Moscow's Silver Chimes steam Calliope DON'T MISS IT.

"Two Complete Performances Daily at 2 and 8 o'clock. ONE 50-CENT TICKET Admits to all the Combined Shows. Children Under 1/2 Half Price.

"Excursion Rates on all Railroads. Will Surely Exhibit In LEAVENWORTH SATURDAY MAY 12th."

The handouts of the Ringling press department were unusually well writ-

ten like the one that appeared in the *Times* on May 3: "EARTH'S STRONGEST MAN. Lundin the Modern Hercules Now with Ringling Bros.' Shows.

"Among the stories of the Bible which have contributed for centuries to make that book of books the most absorbing romance of all history there is none which possesses greater interest for young or old than that of the heroic Samson whose deeds of strength and endurance were in his time the wonder of civilization. Since then every era has had its man of iron muscle whose feats have held the world spellbound with wonder. It has, however, remained for the nineteenth century to produce not only the superior of the long line of steel-limbed men who have emulated the muscular prowess of the Biblical Samson but one whose feats of strength,



Hjalmar Lundin, Sweden's giant of strength, as he appeared in the 1894 Ringling route book. Pfening Archives.

marvelous endurance and perfect symmetry of form have never been approximately equaled. The name of this muscular phenomenon is Lundin and for several years he has been the marvel of Europe. The fabled Hercules would have been put to blush by this paragon of strength and muscular development. Lundin is beyond all question the strongest man in the world. He lifts 3,500 pounds as easily as a child raises a toy. He converts himself into a human bridge and without an effort supports a platform containing twenty full grown men. His chest or back form a fulcrum on which three powerful horses play at seesaw. He supports a stage on which an expert plays upon a grand piano while a soloist renders a repertoire of popular selections. These are but a few of the many incredible feats

which the great Lundin accomplishes. This remarkable man is now in the United States having been brought to this country after a long series of expensive negotiations by the Ringling Brothers, for their World's Greatest Shows, which exhibit in Leavenworth May 12. Lundin commands the enormous salary of \$1,500 a week and travels in his own special car. He lives like a prince and everywhere he goes he is the cynosure of all eyes."

The Leavenworth *Standard* ran a story obviously written by a press agent concerning the arrival of the show. The story added a few names to the roster of performers, including the Leondors and Ashbeys statutory act; Orrin Hollis, somersault rider; and William Irwin, bead balancer.

Describing the parade the story in a delightful phrase referred to the "melodious shoutings of the calliope."

Other reports from the Leavenworth *Standard*: "The police board met yesterday and appointed the following to act as special of officers today: Percy Butler, John Shea, A. Clark, C. Barrett, M. Reagan and George Sutton. The three sanitary officers J. J. Gregg, A. Beiga and Frank Weise are doing special duty today.

"While Mrs. Woerner of Osage Street was in the jam down town this forenoon witnessing the street parade of Ringling Bros.' circus, two pickpockets attempted to relieve her of her pocketbook containing a sum of money. Before the one who was doing the job could extricate his hand from Mrs. Woerner's deep dress pocket she caught his arm and held on until he released the purse. He wrenched his hand loose and disappeared in the crowd, accompanied by his pal. While they were escaping Mrs. Woerner exercised her lungs by crying out 'Catch the thieves! Catch the thieves!'

"About 500 people were at the terminal depot this morning to see the circus unload. The job was completed about 8 o'clock."

The *Times* reported a horse killed by fright: "Last evening while the herd of elephants belonging to the circus was being driven past police headquarters a white horse, belonging to Gardener Putnam, in the market was killed by fright. He looked at the herd, gave a wild snort, reared up, pitched forward on his head and was dead in three minutes. Mr. Putnam has owned the horse for eighteen years. The animal was twenty-four years old."

The best report on circus day appeared in the *Times* on the 13th: "RINGLING'S DAY: 'A Good Show Which Pleased All the People.

"Yesterday was circus day and the city was full of people from the country



and surrounding towns who had come in to munch peanuts, drink red lemonade and see the elephant. The show came in over the Burlington and promptly at 10:30 made its appearance, making one of the best looking circus pageants ever seen here. Since the Barnum and Forepaugh shows have lost their heads and prestige Ringling Brothers' have stepped at once into the lead and the verdict of the people yesterday was that it is about the brightest, cleanest and most entertaining exhibition on the road. While there are two large rings and something going on all the while, yet each act is not bewildered by the multitude of things which generally go to make up a big circus. The trappings, the horses and the costumes of the people are all new and pretty to look at, and the men and women connected with the show are above the usual run of circus talent. Ringling Brothers have over three hundred head of horses. The animals are carefully groomed, and so scrupulously clean that they are a handsome sight, and they look so sleek and fat that it must be that the life of a circus horse is a happy one.

"The menagerie is an entertaining and representative collection of animals all in good condition, and among them the only living giraffe now in America. A Leavenworth man yesterday presented Alf. Ringling with an old bill advertising Battle's Royal circus which appeared in London in 1839. Mr. Ringling values it highly as a curiosity in his business. The bill is printed on white satin and was evidently meant for circulation among the nobility and it bears the names of a number of lords and ladies who acted as patrons.

"Lundin, the strong man, said to be able to lift more than Sandow, was not able to give an exhibition yesterday on account of having sprained some muscle during the show the day before.

"There was a big attendance at both performances yesterday and Mr. Ringling paid Leavenworth a compliment by saying that this city shows more life and activity than any they had showed in this year."

Ringling Bros. Bells of Moscow with an eight horse hitch in 1894. Pfening Archives.

The Ringling story for Topeka began March 21 in the *Topeka State Journal* with a headline, "HIPPOPOTAMUS AT LARGE.

"Baraboo, Wisconsin, March 21.--It is reported here the hippopotamus which escaped from a circus here and reported captured last night, is still at large and making its way down the Wisconsin towards the Mississippi river. It is said the proprietors, in order to allay the fears of the people, have caused it to be reported the big brute had been retaken.

"It is mentioned as a suspicious circumstance that no one has been allowed to enter the animal house since the reported return to captivity and there are many shrewd observers who take little stock in the alleged recapture of the beast."

The *Journal* announced on April 14, that, "Ringling's show will exhibit at Topeka on May 14th. E. M. Drake, agent of Ringling Bros' circus, left a check for \$160 with City Clerk McFadden today for the license to show and give a street parade in Topeka on May 14th. Of this amount \$150 is for the big show and \$10 for the side show."

Advance car No. 1 arrived on April 21 and papered the town and the country side.

Ringling arrived on Sunday via the Union Pacific on two trains of 18 cars each.

After the show had come and gone the *Journal* had some interesting side lights.

"Alf. T. Ringling says his main tent seats 10,000 people easily. If this is true nearly half of Topeka's population must have witnessed one of the two performances; for at neither one were there more than 500 vacant seats.

"Prof. Melville is the musician who plays the calliope. (If you call it a calio-py the circus hands won't know what you mean.)

"Many of the circus hands took baths Sunday.

"There are eight 'candy butchers' with the circus.

"Hjalman Lundin, the strong man from Sweden, supported twelve men on his chest at last night's performance.

"There was something peculiar about the show last night--the ushers were quite gentlemanly.

"The elephants and camels were taken away from the show grounds and loaded into the cars at 9 o'clock last night.

"It seems to me," said a disappointed man at the show, 'that all the poor acts and all the thin girls get into my ring.'

"A little woman tried to shoo the hippopotamus with her fan last night but the beast snorted at her and she nearly fainted.

"A man at the circus last night earned a great deal of admiration in his vicinity by threatening to lick the popcorn man who insisted on standing between him and the ring.

"A large freckle-faced young man created a great deal of amusement on the side last night by exclaiming in a loud voice, 'Well I'll be gol darned,' after each act of the circus.

"The Ringling Brothers allow no drunkenness nor gambling on their show grounds and the employees are not allowed to smoke on the train, nor in the tents during the performance.

"Don't blame a circus man for lying; he can't help it. A tent hand said that Lundin's dumb bells weighed 1,900 pounds. They weigh less than 200 pounds; a *State Journal* reporter saw them weighed.

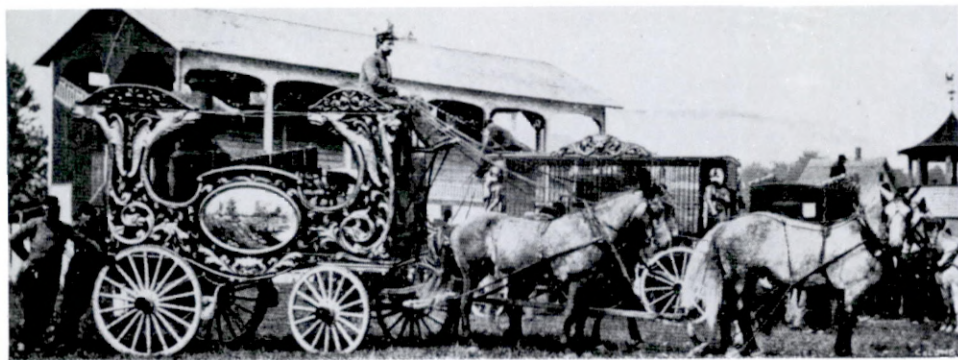
"Ringling's show cleared \$800 in Topeka." No source is cited for this statement.

"What would a circus band be, anyway, without those good old marches, the Gladiator, the High School Cadets and the Washington Post?

"Whenever you get to thinking how hard you have to work remember the circus band and stop complaining.

"A party of patients from the insane asylum,' according to the *Topeka Daily Democrat*, 'were taken to the circus yesterday afternoon.'

The *Topeka Daily Capital* had many



The Ringling steam calliope ready for a parade in 1894. Pfening Archives.

items to add to the memory of circus day.

"Lundin the famous Swede, lifts with his little finger a fifty pound weight. Handles a 300 pound hammer in either hand.

"The majority of peanut and popcorn stands at the grounds outside of the tents were operated by local colored people.

"The circus arrived at 7 o'clock Sunday morning over the Union Pacific. The three trains were immediately unloaded and cages and den wagons were soon at the grounds.

"J. K. Snellen is the chief canvas boss.

"There are twenty-five cages of animals.

"The dishes cups plates etc. are granite and porcelain.

"The tent was staked Sunday but not raised until Monday morning.

"The financial department left \$2,000 in this city in payment of bills.

"There are 350 horses with the show, and they are reported to be 'the finest on earth.'

"There are 521 people with the show. The cars in advance employ an additional 100.

"The circus people are 'death on pies,' 115 custard pies were consumed at dinner yesterday."

The exhibitions at Holton on May 15 drew huge crowds. School was dismissed for the day. The *Holton Tribune* reported: "The jam at the entrance just after dinner [Matinee] was awful. Several ladies fainted and when they all got in, the big tent was 'too full for utterance' and hundreds had to sit on the ground."

The *Holton Recorder* claimed the circus day crowd was the largest ever assembled in Holton. The *Recorder* rated the performance as "an excellent one, wholly without objectionable features. The riding was a slight disappointment, but the racing was very fine. The tumblers were about up to the standard. The living statuary was one of the most beautiful exhibitions ever given in Holton, besides being something novel to

Holton circus goers. The lady with the iron jaw was also a very remarkable attraction. Altogether the audience was a very well pleased one and every one was as happy as the extreme heat and the plentiful dust would let them be."

In other columns the *Recorder* noted: "The parade was good, but was just two hours late.

"The number of drunken people seen on the streets Tuesday was unusually small for circus day. Even the Indians held out better than usual against their traditional enemy, firewater.

"The Indians are peculiar people. Most of the patronage the hacks and carriages got on show day was from the Indians. Very few squaws however got to ride. The old and young bucks would ride in the hacks and their squaws walked and carried the papooses along with the white folks.

"In all the 10,000 or 12,000 people in Holton Tuesday we did not notice a single one who appeared to be in want or was in any way the helpless victim of corporations or pultocrats. They all looked happy and contented and intent on getting as much enjoyment out of the occasion as the great Ringling aggregation was capable of furnishing."

Seneca was visited by three Ringling advance cars prior to circus day on May 16.

The *Seneca News* reported that, "It didn't seem like hard times to see the multitude in the city yesterday, eager to each spend 50 cents to see what they had seen so many times before.

"A merry-go-round, shooting gallery and auction store, all perambulating concerns are willing to take any spare nickles and dimes the circus left.

"The weather yesterday was a real storm breeder.

"There was plenty of drunkenness and many a cracked head yesterday. One fellow escorted by the marshal, passed down the street, his face looking like a fresh killed beef."

Drunkenness on circus day in prohibition Kansas was such a common thing that when a town passed the day in sobriety editors could not let it go unreported.

"Promptly at 10 o'clock," according to

the *News*, "the great pageant of Ringling Bros. appeared on the streets of Seneca in all its grandeur. It was fully up to expectation, and the horses especially attracted great attention. They were a fine lot, some of them magnificent.

"The show itself was even better than in previous years and that is saying a great deal. Last year Seneca gave the Ringlings the banner crowd. [In 1893 Ringling gave a matinee only.] Yesterday the attendance was divided between the two entertainments as there was room enough for all. This great aggregation is sure to give satisfaction wherever it goes."

Ringling Brothers' World's Greatest Shows in 1894 played only four dates in Kansas-Leavenworth, Topeka, Holton and Seneca.

There was nothing but praise in the newspapers in every town, but the *Topeka State Journal* said it best: "A ROYAL CIRCUS DAY.

"Five of the seven Ringling brothers are in town today with their show, and an immense show it is. They came to Topeka Sunday morning over the Union Pacific from Leavenworth, and pitched their tents on the state fair grounds. The army of small boys were on hand to assist in the event of never ceasing interest. They never fail to have an excuse for hanging around when the circus men and the police try in vain to drive them away. Those boys who were on the ground early this morning don't go to school in the morning, and those who are there this afternoon went to school in the morning, and those who stayed all day didn't go to school at all, because they are just 'getting over the measles' or because they expect their 'little sisters have the mumps' or because 'their mothers need them to stay at home and do errands.'

John G. Snellen Ringling Bros. boss canvasman in 1894. Pfening Archives.



"The space the boys don't occupy is filled up with unemployed men. The workmen move about as if unconscious of the spectators.

"J. H. Snellen is the chief canvas man of the circus and so skilled is he in his particular work that when he arrives on the ground he can tell at a glance just how to dispose of them. The big tent is 395 by 195 feet and the annex tent is 310 by 100. Besides these there are other smaller tents too numerous to mention. He carries all the necessary figures and dimensions in his head and with the aid of a tape line fixes the positions of the pins, ropes and poles with different colored pins. The ground seems a confused mass of poles and stakes but Snellen hurries about giving orders that nobody but the men can understand

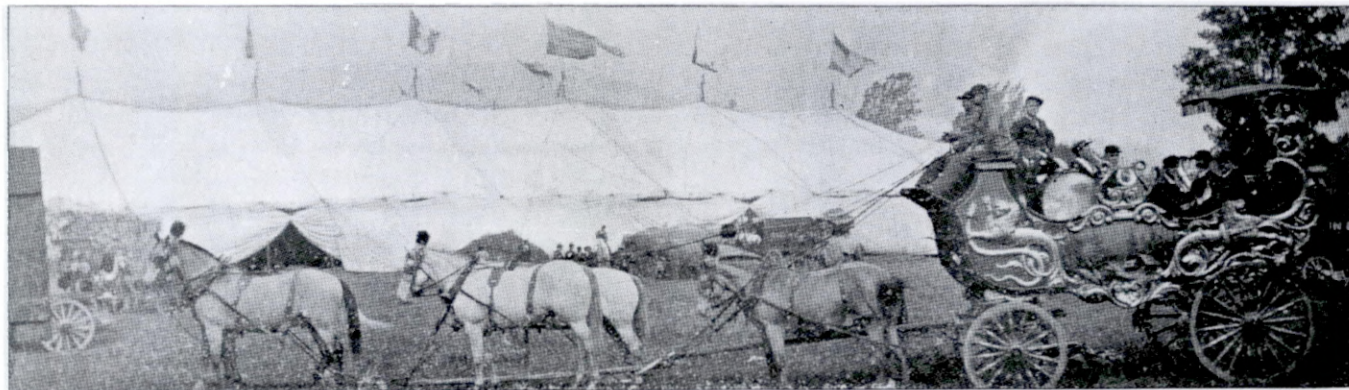
wild beasts from the 'jungles of Africa' as one of the hands said there is the only giraffe on exhibition in America. It is a female giraffe with beautiful hair colored spots on its sides and a neck as long as a clothes line. Its four feet were so close together that they have to spread out like the poles of a tent to enable the animal to keep her balance. Then there is the hippopotamus with a mouth as big as a base drum. Two baby lions are another interesting feature. They are only three weeks old and as tame as kittens, but the mother roars and snarls every time she thinks the spectators are saying anything complimentary about them.

"One of the most interesting figures to be found about the dressing room was Hjalmar Lundin, a young Swede who

taking a rest on a bale of hay. 'It's harder to find any of 'em than as if there was only one. The only way I know is to do something wrong and they'll all be around you, all five of 'em. They'll just jump right up out of the ground. This is the strictest show I ever was with, he continued after borrowing a plug of tobacco and returning about 33 per cent of it. 'You can't do nothing out of the way. They don't allow no grafting and you will get fired if you look cross eyed at a gal.'

"Mr. Alf T. Ringling, the third of the brothers in point of age, was finally located. He was in the ticket wagon and didn't know the reporter was around.

"Say Billy,' he said 'give me some dough.' I want to go up town and pay a few bills.' This remark was addressed to



bringing order out of chaos. The tent is finally brought out of the canvas wagon and spread over the ground.

"At a signal the men raise the edge of the tent, bringing these little poles to a perpendicular. The tent now looks like an enormous flattened white hat with the rim turned up. In a little further the men dive, and soon they begin to push the quarter poles to an upright position. The men at the main poles pull up and slowly the tent begins to assume shape.

"Teams of horses are soon brought into requisition and they pull the bases of the quarter poles to their places. The guy ropes which reach from the edge of the tent to the stakes tighten and soon the big tent is taut and firm. The ropes that hold the poles up are slackened and the canvas sways as it feels the flexibility of the ropes.

"Then the 'side walls' are put on and the seats that are as hard as a railroad track are brought out and placed in position.

"There are 250 laborers and 102 performers with the circus. Fifteen of the latter are women. There are also 300 horses and twenty-one cages in the menagerie. The menagerie forms one of the most interesting features of the circus. The Ringlings have several features that other circuses do not have. Besides the elephants and camels and other

Ringling Bros. No. 2 bandwagon in 1894. Pfening Archives.

says he is as strong as Sandow. He certainly looks it, and the muscles in his arms and back are as strong and hard as iron. He lifts a horse and a man with ease and a 200 pound dumb bell which the reporter could hardly lift was lifted by Lundin with only his little finger and held over his head. He has been unable to perform for several days because he sprained a muscle in his back, but he says he is all right now and proposes to perform today. There are many other good performers of many nationalities and in all they form an army of 102 people.

"One good feature of the circus and one that deserves commendation is its freedom from that disreputable class known among themselves as 'grafters' or confidence men. This class run shell games, pick pockets and resort to similar methods for deriving revenue. They work either on wages or on a percentage of profits. It is stated not only by the Ringlings but by all the men about the place that there isn't a single 'grafter' with the show.

"Where could I find one of the Ringling brothers,' asked a reporter of one of the circus men.

"Dunno,' replied the man who was

a young man who was counting out a bushel of coin.

"How much do you want?"

"Oh, I don't know. I guess eight hundred dollars will be enough. He was given the money in bills and gold, which he deposited in a satchel. He gladly showed the reporter over the whole circus from one end to the other. He is popular with all the men and knows many of them by name. The grub tent was one of the most interesting places on the ground. Here six cooks were hard at work getting up a good dinner for the 509 men who are connected with the circus. And those who think for a minute that they don't have good things to eat are mistaken. For instance the bill of fare this noon was: Veal cutlets breaded with tomato sauce, beef steak, custard pies (15 of them), coffee, besides bread and butter. This was the noon meal, the lightest the men eat. The 5 o'clock dinner is the big meal.

"There are seven of the Ringling brothers connected with the show, but Henry and Gus the youngest two (sic) are not members of the firm. The other brothers arranged according to age: Al, Otto, Alf T., Charles and John."

Research funded in part by grants from Wolfe's Camera & Video, Inc. Topeka, Kansas.

Now Available — Amusing and Informative!

INK FROM A CIRCUS PRESS AGENT



by
CHARLES H. DAY

Circus "Director of Publications" and historian, containing 18 essays, and excerpts from 4 years of his column "Sawdust," with introduction, chronology, personnel reference roster, footnotes and index by William L. Slout for

The Borgo Press

P. O. Box 2845, San Bernardino, CA 92406-2845

Paperback, \$24.00 postpaid.



by **Mark St Leon**

The one, the only, Con Colleano, The Wizard of the Wire. The supreme artist of the tight wire who thrilled and fascinated kings, dictators, Ringling and millions during his career. For the first time ever, his story has been told in the words of those who knew him best.

To order your copy, send a check or money order for AUS \$50 (including airmail) to: Aboriginal Studies Press, GPO Box 553, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia.

Phone: 0011 61 6 246 1191 Fax: 0011 61 6 249 7310. Trade enquiries welcome.

WANTED

Anything pertaining to

LILLIAN LEITZEL

- Memorabilia
- Personal Items
- Stories from people who knew her

Please write to or call:

Laurie Leitzel
137 N. Larchmont Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90004
(310) 280-8444

Please try to respond by May 31, 1995

BUYING

ONE ITEM OR ENTIRE COLLECTION

MOVIE POSTERS

Lobby Cards, 1-Sheets, Window Cards,
Press Books, Studio Annuals,
Fan Magazines, Etc.

COMIC BOOKS

All Pre-1970 Titles

PULP MAGAZINES

Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror,
Aviation, Spicy, Adventure, Detective,
Mystery, Western, Etc.

COMIC & PULP CHARACTER COLLECTIBLES

Big Little Books, Toys, Store Displays,
Original Artwork, Etc.

RADIO & CEREAL PREMIUMS

Rings, Badges, Pinbacks, Decoders,
Statuettes, Membership Kits, Etc.

CIRCUS

Books, Posters, Programs, Scrapbooks,
Autographed Photos, Etc.

**NIGHT OWL BOOKS * P. O. 2232-B
WOODBIDGE, VA. 22193 * (703) 590-2966**

Mike Martin's CIRCUS HOBBY HALL

New Items for the New Year!

NEW VIDEOS-FROM 'ROUND THE WORLD

1. JERRY COTTLE'S CIRCUS - 1977, Documentary with a behind the scenes look at one of England's best tent shows. 30 MIN.
2. CIRCUS RONCALLI - 1992, wonderful highlights of this gorgeous tent show. This is the circus, Soleil would like to be! 60 MIN.
3. MOSCOW CIRCUS IN FRANCE - 1987, More thrilling highlights of some of the best performers in the world. 60 MIN.
4. PEKING CIRCUS - 1981, Marvelous acrobatic performers from this highly acclaimed troupe - never seen in the U.S. 30 MIN.
5. HIGH GRASS CIRCUS - 1980, A behind the scenes look at Canada's Martin & Downs Circus with many well known U.S. performers featured. 60 MIN.
6. SILVER'S CIRCUS - 1992, One of Australia's premiere shows presented by the famed Gasser family. 30 MIN.
7. BEST OF MOSCOW CIRCUS ACTS - 1993, Some of the finest animal and human performers are seen. You won't believe the fantastic liberty camel act and more! 60 MIN.
8. PROS & CONS OF CIRCUS ANIMALS - 1992, A well-balanced documentary produced in Europe. Both points of view are fairly covered. 30 MIN.
9. CHINESE STATE CIRCUS - 1993, U.K. tour shows these great performers under canvas. Featuring acts that haven't toured the US. 60 MIN.
10. CIRCUS U.S.A. - 1993, See this huge British version of an "American 3-Ring Tent Circus" with live music, good clowns and featured English performers and animals. 60 MIN.
11. GANDEY'S CIRCUS - 1993, Another respected name in English Circus, presents it's large, contemporary tent show filled with the best of the British Isles. 60 MIN.

12. ZIPPO'S CIRCUS - 1992, One of England's "no animal" shows, featuring the best of human performers, clowns and aerial artists! 75 MIN.

13. "STARS IN DER MANEGE" - 1993, Munich's marvelous indoor show with fabulous production quality, live music & top flight acts. 90 MIN.

14. "GALA DER ARTISTIK" - 1993, Frankfurt, Germany's circus spectacular with the best European acts and animal features. 90 MIN.

Combine the programs of your choice to make a two hour (120 minute) tape. \$29.50 Postpaid



R/B 124th EDITION PROGRAM

This scarce collectible from 1994 Blue Unit, is spiral bound and features the Elephant Babies with their trainer, the late Ted Svertesky. These were issued early in the season - before the train wreck and are in short supply! EACH \$12.50 Postpaid

CIRCUS NOSTALGIA VOL. 4 - VIDEO

Here's another nostalgic two hours, you're sure to enjoy, filled with great memories of favorite shows of the past. You'll take a colorful trip back to the 40's and 50's with unloading, setup and teardown, backyard scenes and so much more.

Once again you'll be back on the mud show lots of Kelly-Miller 1950-1958, Cristiani Bros. 1958-1960, Mills Bros. 1951-1953 and the Clyde Beatty Circus in 1958 at Palisades Park.

And make your sentimental journey complete with a visit to the Big Railroad shows - Cole & Dailey Bros. plus rare footage of Hagenbeck-Wallace and Downie in 1933.

2 Full Hours - \$29.50 Postpaid



All orders in the Continental U.S. and Canada Postpaid. Europe and the rest of the world please add \$5.00 per item

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

Mike Martin

Dept. BW - 16840 S.W. 62 St.
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33331
Fla. residents add 6% Sales tax

Circus Life and Adventure of ADAM BARDY

A Connecticut magazine recently wrote this about Adam Bardy's book:

"If you're still a kid at heart when the circus comes to town, you'll love Adam Bardy's life story of his adventures of circus life. Adam Bardy was born in Webster on May 21, 1907. Back in 1907 thousands of immigrants from Europe kept coming to America.

"Bardy's life might be compared somewhat to Mark Twain's boyhood heroes Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, and back in 1907 in June, Mark Twain met George Bernard Shaw in London. It was a rainy Saturday when the Buffalo Bill Circus came to Webster. Adam Bardy was only 8 years old when he crawled into a circus wagon that night. However on Sunday morning when he crawled out of his hiding place, he wanted to get back home. Bardy had to have a guardian angel as he got back home before he was missed.

"In 1924 Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey Circus played in Worcester. Bardy's interest in the circus was renewed and he got a job with the side show. The circus liked getting young men to join them because it was out of young people that real circus troupers were made.

"Bardy found that circus life in the roaring twenties was rough and tough. On sunny days it was wonderful, but on rainy days you went to bed in the circus cars with wet clothes, and you would have to wait for a sunny day to dry out. If you could put in a full circus season under these conditions, you would be called a real trouper. In the twenties Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey was a railroad circus. It traveled in four sections. The first section was the cookhouse crew along with some circus wagons that carried the cookhouse. The second section carried most of the circus wagons and the stock cars full of work horses and nearly all the working crew. The third section carried the wild animal cages. There were 43 elephants with the circus.

"One of our heroes was Tom Mix and on Saturday afternoon when the local movie theater featured westerns. Tom Mix and his wonder horse Tony was a favorite of young and old movie fans. We recall that Tom Mix was with the Sells Floto Circus and we were invited to attend the circus and see Mix in person in Willimantic. Adam Bardy was working with the Sells-Floto Circus at the time and knew Mix very well. There were more circuses in business in the twenties than there are now. Hagenback and Wallace, John Robinson, Al G. Barnes, Sparks and Walter L. Main were some of the big ones



"Few folks realized that Tom Mix was at one time a real sheriff, a Deputy U.S. Marshall, a Texas Ranger, a real cow puncher and ranch foreman. He was even Roughrider under Teddy Roosevelt. For Bardy to personally know and work with Mix was one of the truly great thrills of his wonderful life. Mix was one of the truly greats of the silent movies.

"Adam Bardy at the age of 86 can look back at his many adventurous experiences in the circus, life with Gypsies, fortune telling, bootlegging, marriages, and finding love and happiness.

"He has written a book The Circus Life and Adventure of Adam Bardy. This book would have made a wonderful movie with enough wholesome family desires of an eight year old "running away" for a day; joining the circus and becoming a boss canvasman and having his crew set up the big circus tent while still a teenager. Fortune telling, boxing, bootlegging, and after four score years becoming a successful author. With the right promotional agency, the life and adventures of Adam Bardy could be made into a television series that might parallel the Untouchables and

Little House on the Prairie. Many men desire the anonymity of Mister X but Adam Bardy is a real Mr. X . . . Ex-Circus Man, Ex-Pugilist, Ex-Still Operator, Ex-Bootlegger, Ex-Fortune Teller, and an excellent author."

The book includes many pictures that tell the life story of Adam. For an autographed copy of Circus Life and Adventure of Adam Bardy, send check or money order for \$12.95 to:

ADAM BARDY

87 Alm Rd.

Thompson, CT 06277